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THE DOOM OF DOGMA

AND THE

DAWN OF TRUTH

BY

HENRY FRANK

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PREFACE

WE have passed the age of Iconoclasm and entered the period of Reconstruction.

The Theology of Mediævalism is dead beyond recovery.

The furious storm of criticism and conflict, which raged for a century or more, has abated, and left amid the debris and ruin of ancient error the relics of prophetic truth on which the superstructure of Higher Criticism and Scientific Reconstruction can be reared.

It has been the effort of the author of this book to outline a system of interpretation, which, while it denudes the ancient Christian structure of its gargoyles of superstition and metaphysical phantasy, retains sufficient of its framework to evidence its original purity of purpose, and its kinship with all other similar efforts of mankind.

While the author believes the perusal of these pages will destroy what blind faith the reader may have entertained in the fragile fables and "old women's tales" of antiquity, he does not despair of having substituted a New Interpretation for vagaries and ignorant assumptions which will sustain and invigorate every one who sincerely aspires after

Truth, unhampered by the bias of tradition and the limitation of assertive theory.

If the author could have achieved nothing more than the tearing down of old moss-grown walls, sacred to the memory of a thousand years; if he had foreseen that his mission was but to desecrate the shrines and firesides of ancient temples and consecrated homes, witnessing naught but the consternation of the faithful and the groans of the defeated, he would have desisted.

But because he believes he has substituted a talisman of truth for every fane demolished; a scripture of science for every phantasy of faith; logical deduction and convincing demonstration for emotional frenzy and the rhapsodies of rhetoric; hope for despair; justice for iniquity, and common-sense for rash credulity; he has been encouraged to offer the results of his personal study to the world.

Slowly through many years these conclusions have come to him couched in the soul's sincere convictions. For many years a preacher in orthodox churches, holding responsible places in different evangelical denominations, at last forced for the sake of conscience and consistency to unload all the impedimenta of ancient ignorance and modern superstition, and to construct an independent system of religious instruction for those who care to follow him, he has in these pages illustrated the methods of research which he pursued to reach his final conclusions.

An honest investigation of Christian Dogma proves that like all other religious systems, it has originated, triumphed, and decayed, according to the laws of human progress.

Christianity contained nothing original, *sui generis*, or distinguishable, save in local coloring, from all the religions which preceded it.

The heart of man is everywhere the same, and its search after final truth must pursue the same tortuous paths in all climes and periods of time.

All religion is kindred as is all thought.

Man is one as is Nature—as is God.

God, Man, and Nature, are all one, and what we call religion is but the conscious effort of humanity to discern this Unity and symbolize it in certain forms of worship.

That antiquity, buried in the night of ignorance, should have failed, we cannot marvel; but that there is a religion, enlightened, truthful, unhypocritical, and strictly scientific, we sincerely believe, and have sought somewhat to foreshadow in the following pages.

If the author succeeds in arousing from lethargy those who indifferently embrace the popular faith, unmindful of the tremendous strides which modern discovery and criticism have made; also, if he succeeds in reminding those, who in disgust refuse further to be concerned in defeated dogmas and "foolish notions," that all error contains some truth, so that if they have cast aside the shell it is their duty to search for the rejected kernel,—then his task will have been happily finished.

If the Ideal Theology portrayed herein shall prove to be a purified Anthropology, substituting Exalted Man for Demonized Deity, the author will not have occasion to exclaim *Peccavi.*

New York City. H. F.
May 15, 1901.

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THE DOOM OF DOGMA AND DAWN OF TRUTH

INTRODUCTION

I

THE dawn of a new era is at hand. The mind of man is disenthralled. The dense ignorance which once enclosed him like the gloom of primeval forests is scattered by the shafts of light which penetrate it. Knowledge is now the compass men seek to guide them across the sea of discovery. Faith is no longer the needle men trust to lead them where Reason refuses to follow. Authority resides not now in creed, or revelation, or priest.

(The rational man submits to but one authority—the Truth.) His only revelation is the universe, interpreted in the terms of his enlightened soul. His faith is a postulate of science resting upon experience and prophesying still other undiscovered experiences. The fear of hell ceases to be a torture —having vanished like the illusions of a grewsome nightmare. The priest, standing in the place of

eternal Truth, can no more rescue a soul from damnation by intercessory prayer, nor can a crucified Savior, by a voluntary vicariousness, satisfy the demands of infinite justice and by the shedding of his blood cause the remission of the sins of mankind. Those myths of theology have passed away with the Olympian dreams of the ancient gods.

But having cast away the myths of olden times the enlightened soul has found substantial substitutes which have more than satisfied the heart, while not failing to fulfil the severest demands of Reason. The rational soul demands the Truth. Error can never be a lasting comfort. For a time its illusions may seem to please the uneducated senses or bring a feeling of ease to the passive heart. But when at last the Pandora Box of mystery is opened to the searching mind the shock of pain is more intense than ever the delusions of bliss which once entranced it.

Truth is the eternal principle of the universe. Without truth there were no universe. Truth is the comprehension of reality. It is the coincidence of the idea with the fact. It is the demonstration to our consciousness that whatever is represented to the mind as a subjective state finds its exact counterpart in the objective world; that subjective and objective perceptions are both mental abstractions; that such abstractions must be coincident, the subjective finding its exact realization in the objective, that truth may be demonstrated. Truth is therefore the realization of the universe. As I have said, without truth there were no universe. For, unless there were the exact coincidence of the subjective

and the objective mental states, man would find himself in a world of chaos, much as the insane subject who revels in unrealizable dreams and ever wanders in search of that which is an actuality to him but can never be complemented in the common experience of the race.

Truth is the demonstration of unity. To understand the unit is to comprehend the all. The unit is the key. This key alone unlocks the universe of knowledge. The unity of the universe is the watchword of the new reformation, the touchstone of the new revelation. If the universe be a unit, then all knowledge must be correlated. Reality cannot be contradictory; what is truth to the human consciousness must be truth wherever similar experiences are known. What is truth to man must be truth to all existing conscious beings. That which is truth to man must be truth to God. The universe is one. Humanity is one. The heart of man is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Human experiences move in a circle. The dead past — a thousand years submerged—returns, the child of the new-born day, new born but not new created. Like the myth of the Jormungandr, the mid-earth or mid-sea serpent, with his tail in his mouth and that continually growing into his body, the human kind has ever been growing in upon itself, ever self-revealing and re-revealing age unto age and experience unto experience.

Thus truly, as the prophet hath sung, "There is no new thing under the sun." No invention in this mercurial age but what has its counterpart in the remote triumphs of antiquity. There is not a

discovered datum of science, not an invention, not a practical triumph in the arts, but proves to be a reawakening of the all-wisdom of that far-off mysterious past. We have a Darwin who has with the analytical clearness of the modern practical mind stated the doctrine of evolution and descent. But the world of ancient myths swarmed with mystical conceptions in exposition of the identical teaching of the moderns, who have only more clearly set forth what the less analytical minds of antiquity engrossed in the imagery of poetry and song. Who shall say that our philosophy has gone one whit beyond Plato and Aristotle, notwithstanding our Kants and Descartes? A Brooklyn bridge is indeed a marvel of scientific invention, but there are more wonders in the lost arts of antiquity than can be equalled by modern achievement.

All thought is old. Every discovery is but the restoration of a broken memory-image, which has long lain dormant in the mind of the race. All inspiration is ancient: the bibles of the world are all one and almost read like mutual imitations. Religion is coeval with the birth of thought and consciousness. All religions are alike. The Christian Church is nothing new.

Christianity is as old as man. The truths which have been from all time inherent in the bosom of the Eternal have by slow processes percolated through the human mind. It is, of course, not intended here to insinuate that historical Christianity has been coexistent with man. That were a palpable untruth. But the principles, precepts, ideals, and inspirations which emanated from the career of Jesus and tri-

umphed over the world, are the same as the wisest of all ages have ever inculcated. However, it is true that through the perverseness of the human heart and the blindness of human reason, these truths for long ages had been forgotten, yea, had relapsed into oblivion, until revived in the age of Jesus.

But religions, like all else human, like systems of philosophy and government, like the monuments of genius and the glories of civilization, have risen but to "blaze and pass away." Religions, like nations and the race, are born but to die. This sad fact is as true of Christianity as of all else human and earthly. Though great and noble institutions have been founded in the name of exalted ideals, which have for a limited period gloriously flourished, nevertheless these very institutions have in the course of time become the instrumentalities which have themselves demolished and obliterated the ideals for which they once stood.

Thus the Church of Jesus Christ, whose cornerstone was the Sermon on the Mount, the keystone of whose loftiest arch was the last injunction of Jesus, "Love ye one another," becomes in time the arsenal from which fierce contestants seize their weapons that the earth may flow with human blood and the Shekinah of Truth be buried in the battle smoke of ages! The Church, whose arms of purity should have uplifted, as did its Founder, the gloomy hearts of men above the deadly miasmas of falsehood and deceit, of shame and self-confusion, became, alas! but an overshadowing incubus of horror, whose imperious impudence drove mankind deeper into the slimy bed of spiritual darkness.

Although these statements are but the reiteration of the commonplaces of history, the curious fact remains for us to comprehend, that though the institutional Church sank to such infamous depths of corruption, political intrigue, and social deformity, nevertheless the revolutions of time have not yet razed her foundations; she still lives, despite the reactions of popular disgust and resentful exasperation. It was the charm of Voltaire's boast which so conquered the dilettant learning of his day, when he exclaimed, "They say it took twelve men to establish the Christian religion, but I am eager to show them that it takes only one man to destroy it." Nevertheless, Voltaire is silenced and the Church still thunders.

How shall we explain this curious fact? The answer is simple. The Church is not yet overthrown because, despite her moral malformations and corroding infamies, her masking in the name of truth and smirching heaven's livery in the name of Jesus, nevertheless her foundations rest on eternal principles, incontrovertible and all-conquering, which must ever reassert themselves and become the presiding divinities of Christendom.

Despite the distortions of truth which the Church has foisted on purblind humanity, it nevertheless remains a fact of history that she is the living offspring of a Founder whose life, as pictured in sacred literature, breathed forth an atmosphere of unexampled purity and sublimed, by its spiritual emanations, the lives of most of those who were encompassed by its influence.

But some may challenge this statement; may in-

terpose that the historical verity of Jesus Christ is not sufficiently certain for such a positive assertion as I have made.

Be he what he may, fact or fiction, a character or a myth, historically construed; nevertheless, who shall deny that, morally, interpreted from the point of social progress and human advancement, the story of this life is the most momentous and important in all history? It is folly and waste of time to contend for the historical verity of Jesus. A greater verity confronts us: a social certitude, a moral emphasis.

I refer to those influences, age-pervading and irresistible, which have emanated from that mysterious or mystic personage; to the ideas and principles, the ideals and aspirations which have become the heritage of mankind through the matchless message of the Gospels. All honest students of history are forced to agree with the sceptic Rousseau, when he says: "I have told you many times over, nobody in the world respects the Gospel more than I; it is, to my taste, the most sublime of all books; when all others tire me I take it up again with always new pleasure; and when all human consolations have failed me, I have never sought those which it gives in vain" (Letter to M. Vernes of Geneva, March 25, 1758, referred to in Cairn's *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century*).

But perhaps Rousseau goes to too great length when he argues from the internal beauties of the Gospels that they must have had a divine origin. What matters it whether they be infallibly inspired or not? whether they speak the actual events of

history or not? Say what you will, they sing the song of universal experience — realized or potential —which they incorporate and portray in an ideal life, so cosmopolitan, so comprehensive, so universal, it towers far above the plane of humanity and moves among the stars.

The story of the ideal life which the Gospels depict may not be historically true of any one personage who may have existed on this planet; nevertheless, it is a true story, for it portrays human life —its experiences and its solemn possibilities; and every human character which has been patterned after that ideal has certainly and safely found the narrow path that leads to eternal realization. This is enough. We need no more.

Destroy the Jesus of history—you cannot destroy the Jesus of experience! Obliterate the fact — you cannot obliterate the ideal! Jesus the man may be forgotten in ages yet to be. The Gospels may be unknown to the Martians who ages hence may visit this planet, but Jesus, the moral fact, can never be forgotten. The Gospel records, cast in the similitude of universal human experience, which they mystically gathered as a halo around the head of only one individual, these—as expressions of human life and aspiration — can never be forgotten or blotted out of human history.

In order to present this fact more clearly, namely, that the moral fact of Jesus has pervaded all history notwithstanding the innumerable misconceptions of him entertained by men, I will refer to some illustrations. And first of art.

II

Art has ever been the index of each age's deepest, truest thought. We are reminded of this whether we study architecture, sculpture, music, literature, or painting. If an age be full of wit and wisdom it is evidenced in its achievements in the arts. In this regard the age of Pericles has no equal in history. If an age be full of fancy and artificiality it soon manifests itself in its literature, its music, or its architecture.

Speaking of the times of Chaucer, M. Taine remarks: "When you look at a cathedral of that time you feel a sort of fear. Substance is wanting; the walls are hollowed out to make room for windows; the elaborate work of the porches—support has been withdrawn to give way to ornament; the dazzling centre-rose of the portal and the painted glass throw a diapered light on the carved stalls of the choir, the gold work of the altar—and amid this violet light, this quivering purple, amid these arrows of gold which pierce the gloom, the building is like the tail of a peacock."

All this is but an evidence of the thought and manners of the age. What else could you expect from a time when the court manners justified such luxury of personal adornment as "doublets of scarlet satin; cloaks of sable, costing a thousand ducats; velvet shoes, embroidered with gold and silver; boots with falling tops, from whence hung a cloud of lace, embroidered with figures of birds, animals, constellations, flowers in silver and gold, or precious stones"?

In an age when the popular conception of womankind was most pure and exalted, it was possible for a Raphael and an Angelo to exist and transform the canvas into the breathing visions of beauty which inhabited their souls. But as mediæval Christianity, through the ideal of womanhood exhibited in the ennobling conceptions of Mother Mary, exalted all womankind and thus lifted her to a plane she had not before occupied in the world's history, so, by similar influences, strange to say, the once simple and tender conceptions of Jesus were transformed into those of cruelty, which were exhibited in the prevailing art.

The canvas and the palette of the first twelve centuries of the Christian era reveal to us a surprising fact concerning the popular conception of Jesus Christ. In the earlier ages of the Church the artists were wont to picture Jesus as the tender-hearted Good Shepherd, after the parable which he himself proclaimed to the listening disciples in Galilee.

He was seen with long, manly locks, flowing to the breeze, with unsandalled feet and loosely gathered robe thrown from his shoulders, holding in his arms a little lamb that had wandered from the fold, which his eyes behold with sympathetic sadness, while his lips faintly smile, as if in satisfaction of a noble work tenderly executed. When the Master was thus represented he must have awakened in the minds of his adoring devotees noble thoughts and feelings of exalted tenderness; yea, aspirations in their souls to become as was he—gentle, kindly, loving, and forgiving.

But ere long these artistic conceptions of the

Great Teacher were altered. The ecclesiastic teaching had changed and with it the artistic. From the gentle shepherd and the tender guide he becomes the austere commander and relentless judge. Then art altered its exalted ideals. "In the eleventh century—the Good Shepherd entirely disappeared, the miracles of mercy became less frequent and were replaced by the details of the Passion and the terrors of the Last Judgment. The countenance of Christ became sterner, older, and more mournful. About the twelfth century this change became almost universal. From this period, writes one of the most learned of modern historians, 'Christ appears more and more melancholy, and often truly terrible. It is, indeed, the *rex tremendæ majestatis* of our *Dies Iræ*. It is almost the God of the Jews making fear the beginning of wisdom.'"[1][2]

And yet he said of himself: "The Son of Man came not into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly; my yoke is easy and my burden is light." But now, how changed! He that was the gentle Shepherd has become the hardened and heartless Judge. And yet had the people forgotten the "meek and lowly" Guide, or had only the ecclesiastics sought to transform that once tender countenance into austerity and sternness?

The question affords us an opportunity of discerning the historical causes of conflict between the

[1] Didron, *Iconographie Chrétienne, Histoire de Dieu*, p. 262.
[2] Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, vol. i., p. 74.

Church authorities and the trend of the popular thought.

The people are ever near to nature's heart. The spiritual autocrat, as well as the social aristocrat, loves to live aloof from the common herd, that he may hold undisturbed communion with his selfish purposes and deep-laid schemes. The people are ever natural; they feel naught but the throb of the common pulse, their instinctive response is to the cry for help and to the groan of pain. But they who sit in places of power, whether civil or ecclesiastic, are ever bent upon silent intrigue; unaffected by the popular condition, they seek but to sustain their artificial dignity and to enhance their acquirement of glory.

The people, unoppressed by deceptive authority, seek but the truth at whatever hazard; they yearn for the common peace even under the necessity of individual sacrifice. But pompous rulers strive only after riches, power, and self-aggrandizement.

There are but few men who, lifted above the common level and exalted to a lofty altitude of social prominence, have the mental balance or the moral fortitude to resist the temptation of overruling their benefactors and assuming prerogatives which are usurpations of unwarranted power. History is replete with exhaustless illustrations of this grim fact, no less in the annals of the Church than of the State.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty in religion as in politics. Hence the gradual separation between the people and the prelate, the ecclesiastic and the proletarian, which in our day has grown to

such aggravating prominence as to be regarded as a grievance by the clergy, who would, if possible, determine the cause of the rabble's disregard for them. But in the age which we are now contemplating, the rabble, that is the masses, had not yet wholly wandered from the sacred walls of the church. It had not yet been found necessary to inject the curious query into a clerical conclave, which is so common in our day, "What can we do to draw the masses into our religious meetings?" Says one of the present age, "When optimists point us to the thousands of pounds annually spent on church buildings, and to the great activity among all church workers, as a proof that scepticism is not on the increase, we can only reply that there are more and grander buildings for worship than at any former period of our history, but that these costly temples are often not half filled, and outside all churches we find the largest part of the population."[1]

This, coming from a strictly orthodox authority, cannot be disputed. But in the far-away times of which we are writing, we discover the beginnings of this anomalous religious condition. Thought had even then begun to agitate the popular mind; tiring of her mental shackles, the age began to tear them asunder. The air trembled with the first rude outbursts of free speech.

Reason, like a coarse, crude carpenter, began to twist her stern and sullen auger through and through the fallacious timber of the times, that she might erect anew a structure that would endure the onslaughts of polemic storms in ensuing ages.

[1] Fordyce, *Aspects of Scepticism*, p. 8.

Knowledge, like Orestes, too long pursued by the furies of ignorance, superstition, and fear, fled at length to the temple of truth, and there found rest and conquest which come alone through peace and safety. Man began to realize his godship.[1] It was, indeed, a new age—the age of the Renaissance. The study of the Greek and Roman literature — its philosophies and pseudo-sciences — opened up a new-old world to the student, and soon thrilled his age with revolution's inspirations, whose awakening has not abated even at this late day.

But would not the revival of these philosophies destroy the authority of the Church? Would it not

[1] "The conflict of Faith in our day is most arduous and fell. It lies surrounded by real or potential enemies. Science cannot publish her discoveries without letting us hear the shock of their collision with the ancient Faith. The political philosopher seeks to show how the state can live and prosper without religion; the ethical thinker, how right can prosper and law govern without God. A philosophy that denies the surest and most necessary religious truths works in harmony with a criticism that resolves into mythologies the holiest religious histories. A large section of our literature, including some of the finest creations of the imagination, interpret Nature and Man, exhibit life and destiny, from the standpoint of those who have consciously renounced belief in God, and can find on earth nothing divine but humanity. Our working men listen to theories of life that leave around them only blank material walls, within them no spiritual reality, before them no higher and larger hope."—*The City of God: A Series of Discussions on Religion*, by A. M. Fairbairn, D.D., quoted in Fordyce, *Scepticism*.

I quote the above to show the mistaken interpretation of modern intellectual forces which even the most learned and intuitive among the creed-limited thinkers of the day entertain. I write this book with the hope of showing that despite the overthrow of all the old conceptions there may come to human kind a "higher and a larger hope," embodied in the spiritual reinterpretations of old doctrines and the discernment of supreme ideals.

shatter the dogmatic attitude of the ecclesiastics who preferred to bolster up their assumptions by concealing from the people the sources of their worldly wisdom, whilst they pretended to receive their spiritual understanding through direct communication with the Divine Throne? Surely the age of Anselm could never agree with the age of Origen and Clement. That noble philosophy of the Greeks which had given these two great champions of spiritual truth to the Church must be condemned and annihilated else the bubble of papal authority will burst, the shell of ecclesiasticism become worm-eaten and at last be crushed in the relentless grasp of examination and exposure.

Nevertheless, the fate they feared befell them. At last the bubble of hierarchical bombast burst in the heroic grasp of Martin Luther, and papal authority vanished before the searchlight of the scholars of the sixteenth century. They scorned the barbarous faith of mere authority, and, in the face of obloquy, shame, and persecution, shattered the towering strength of ecclesiastical usurpation, till each of these giant reformers reminds us of Tennyson's hero who

> "Fought his doubts and gathered strength;
> He would not make his judgment blind,
> He faced the spectres of the mind,
> And laid them: thus he came at length
> To find a stronger faith his own."

The established Church—the Church of autocracy and vested authority—fell back, basely defeated

before the hosts of enlightenment and reason. For some years a spirit of freedom and investigation prevailed throughout Christendom. But the mysterious authority of the Divine Presence was merely transposed from Romanism to Protestantism—from the Vatican's incensed Holy of Holies to the superstitious chancels of revolting chapels.

Hence, in the eighteenth century, when the smouldering fires of the Reformation, long since subsided, were again roused to activity, once more the Church was enwrapt in a consuming conflagration.

A new school of antagonists arose who were denounced by the voices of authority as Deists and Atheists. This school of thinkers boldly attacked the very foundations of faith. Their minds were wholly freed from sympathy with the conventional indoctrination. Seemingly their effort was to destroy the Church utterly, and the Bible on which it rested, leaving, if possible, not a vestige of its existence for the recognition of future generations.

But, in fact, this was not the true motive that inspired the deistic antagonism to Church and State a century ago. The real object of this widespread movement was to expose the futility of the prelate's effort, the hollowness of his vapid claim in glorifying the Holy Bible as an infallible book.

In our dispassioned review of that age we need not be shocked because the leaders of the intellectual Renaissance, which was honeycombing the pillars of ecclesiastical support, were denounced as Deists or Atheists; let us not forget that the best and purest souls of earth have been thus denounced by those who understood them not.

Abraham was one of the first Atheists of recorded history. He fearlessly denied the gods of his father's country, and, ostracized therefor, went forth to seek "a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God."

Buddha, who lovingly reformed one of the basest systems of ecclesiastical corruption, and, personally, was possessed of a most exalted character, was likewise pronounced an Atheist, because he denied the alleged divine authority of the Brahmins and rejected the asceticism of the Rishis.

Socrates, who cheerfully drank the deadly hemlock, and welcomed death with a philosopher's wisdom; Socrates, from whose sacred prison cell the breath of inspiration has ever since aroused the minds of men—even this noble Socrates was declared to be an Atheist and a corrupter of youth because he denied the gods of the Areopagus and the authority of the Delphic oracle.

Spinoza, whose native spirit was so inwoven in the Eternal that it has been said of him that he was "God-intoxicated"; Spinoza, whose consciousness of God was so supreme and omnipresent, that he saw only Him in everything,—even he was bitterly denounced as an Atheist, driven from the temple in Amsterdam, and ostracized in his native city.

Even Jesus himself, whom all the world to-day exalts as the sublimest personage of time, was cursed by the coarse-visaged of his day as an Atheist and a blasphemer, a wine-bibber and a glutton.

The history of persecution has long since demonstrated that those whom the powers in authority condemn are wiser than their generation, and them

the future ages are sure to honor. Constantly the investigations of history are reinforcing this conviction.

As says Max Müller:

"To quote only one case which has lately been more carefully re-examined, Vanini was condemned to have his tongue torn out and to be burnt alive (A.D. 1619) because, as his own judge declared, though many declared him a heresiarch only, he condemned him as an Atheist. . . . It is but right that we should hear what this Atheist said: 'You ask me what God is? If I knew it I should be God, for no one knows God but God Himself. Let us say He is the Greatest Good, the first Being, the whole, just, compassionate, blessed, calm, the father, king, ruler, rewarder; the author, life-giver, the artificer, providence, benefactor. He alone is all in all'" (*Origin of Religion*, p. 295).

Here we behold a profound philosopher whose wisdom was far beyond his time, ground beneath the wheels of a persecuting age, which, because it could not comprehend him, concluded it could only kill him.

Let us not be scared off from the study of a world-reformer because the churchly powers that be condemn him as an Atheist.

Now let us examine the work of the so-called Deists and Atheists of the eighteenth century and seek the direct object of their reformation.

They sought merely to restore the old ideas about God and the Bible which prevailed among the leaders of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. In so far as they resuscitated those long-buried

conceptions they were successful, and the Church never, in a single instance, defeated them. What was the gist of that old conception? Simply this: that we must expect to find only such a God revealed in the Bible as has already in all human experience revealed Himself to the consciousness and understanding of mankind. In short, the God of revealed religion must be consistent and identical with the God of natural religion. There can be no conflict between revelation and discovery, between inspiration and reason. The laws of logic, the processes of ratiocination, must be the same in God as in man. Hence, what man's reason compels him to accept as a truth, must likewise be a truth with God. These principles are indestructible, eternal, and universal. They are principles begotten in the human mind by God Himself, and if their efficacy be denied in man they must also be denied in God. If there be any revelation it can be delivered only through and because of man's reason; and to deny him the right to judge of that revelation by his reason is to stultify both him and the revelator. Man will only rightly apprehend his Deity when he trusts his divine reason—trusting it as the handmaid of his conscience. These two voices alike reveal the presence of the indwelling God, ever pleading with the froward and rebellious heart of man.

This was the real and simple purpose of the Deists. They sought to emphasize the knowledge of the indwelling Deity, whose existence the early fathers and reformers so ardently proclaimed. But the consciousness of the indwelling God the Church

had, by her unnatural and repulsive doctrine of total depravity, almost wholly annihilated in her blind followers.

Dr. Cairns, referring to Tindal, one of the leading Deists of that age, says: "Tindal argued against the necessity or even admissibility of revelation, because the law of nature grounded in the Being of God and His relations to His creatures, could not be superseded, but must, from the perfection of God and His love to His creatures, be as perfect at any one time as another." Further, the same author comments: "Nothing can be more admirable than the reasoning of Dr. Conybeare in reply to Tindal. He shows that he has confounded the law of nature, which is without man, with the light of nature which is within him, and which alone can be called 'natural religion'; that this, being in man, does not partake of the immutability which belongs to God, and can only be perfect in a relative sense."[1]

The fact that Dr. Cairns, in the nineteenth century, corroborates the reasoning of Dr. Conybeare in the eighteenth, shows how long it takes for the conviction of the truth to seize the human mind, however intelligent. Tindal's contention is that nature is one—and if there be any laws in nature they are universal and under fixed conditions will always manifest themselves. Therefore there is no "law of nature which is without man" to be contradistinguished from "the light of nature which is within man." Here was the gross and crucial error of the philosophy which the Church then

[1] Dr. John Cairns, *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 16, 17 (Franklin Square Library Ed.).

enunciated, and holds even in our day. If nature be one, the "light within" must correspond with the "law without." There is no "law without" that can shadow forth the condemnation of a malignant deity, while the "light within" gives peace to the silent soul. If the soul be condemned by the "light within," the "law without" must likewise condemn, and *vice versa*.

This effort to postulate a dual God, who manifests Himself outwardly in a permanent law and inwardly as a special savior, is evidently false. For it would contravene every possibility of law and annihilate the moral order of the universe. To-day we have learned that because of this very moral order the stability of mankind is preserved as is the stability of the universe. You can no more, with impunity to the race, contravene or reverse the moral order in the treatment of mankind, than you can annihilate the force of gravity and preserve the integrity of the universe. This proposition is so clear to this scientific age that we marvel it was ever questioned. But this was all that Tindal was contending for, who, nevertheless, was so severely censured.

The virulence of the Church party against the Voltairians in France really accomplished the ends of infidelity far more effectively than did all the attacks of the sceptics upon the Christian system. But had the Church of his day been able to perceive and grasp the spiritual *finesse* of Voltaire's argument it would have saved itself a century of conflicts and defeats.

For, as Morley asserts, "It cannot be too often repeated that the Christianity which Voltaire

assailed was not that of the Sermon on the Mount, for there was not a man then alive more keenly sensible than he was of the generous humanity which is there enjoined with a force that so strongly touches the heart, nor one who was on the whole, in spite of constitutional infirmities and words which were far worse than his deeds, more ardent and persevering in its practice. Still less was he the enemy of a form of Christianity which now fascinates many fine and subtle minds, and which, starting from the assumption that there are certain inborn cravings in the human heart, constant, profound, and inextinguishable, discerns in the long religious tradition an adequate proof that the mystic faith in the incarnation, and in the spiritual facts which pour like rays from that awful centre, are the highest satisfaction which a divine will has as yet been pleased to establish for all these yearnings of the race of men" (*Voltaire*, John Morley, p. 160).

From all this it is very evident that the true contention of the so-called Deists or Atheists of the eighteenth century was for a more exalted standard of life, and for a provable, rational, and adaptable Deity, whose existence need not be apologized for in the presence of thinkers.

Rousseau, at one time overcome by a profound religious passion, thus bursts out in admiration of the Christian's Deity, thinking he at last discerns in Him a complete satisfaction for the rationale of existence: "The first and the most common view is the most simple and reasonable. Imagine all your philosophers, ancient and modern, to have first exhausted their eccentric systems of forces, of

chance, of fatality, of necessity, of atoms, of an animated world, of a living matter, of materialism of every kind; and that, after them all, the illustrious Clarke enlightens the world by announcing finally the Being of beings and the Disposer of events; with what universal admiration would not this new system have been received,—so grand, so consoling, so sublime, so fitted to exalt the soul, to give a basis to virtue, and at the same time so striking, so luminous, so simple, and, as it seems to me, offering fewer things incomprehensible to the human mind than one finds of absurdities in every other system. I said to myself: 'The insoluble objections are common to all because the human mind is too limited to explain them. Ought not therefore that scheme alone to be preferred which explains everything and has no more difficulty than the rest'?"[1]

This remarkable passage from Rousseau is only valuable to-day in that it proves the deep yearning of the sceptical souls of that age for a rational system of faith that would at once quicken and inspire the heart and soul without shocking and offending the logical mind. But, after all, the passage is simply a curiosity of literature showing how even the keenest of intellects can at times be overclouded by an uprising of profound emotion. It is no wonder that Voltaire revolted at his unscientific sentimentalism and complained that Rousseau was merely a writer of "extravagant ideas and contradictory paradoxes."

[1] Œuvres, *Émile*, vol. ix., p. 20. Quoted in Dr. Cairns's *Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 28 (Franklin Square Ed).

But I have examined, at this length, the trend of thought among the so-called infidels or Deists of that day merely to prove that the great, deep yearning of their minds was for some expression of soul, some illumination of genius, that would at once satisfy the demands of their severe reason and the spiritual awakening of their profound spirits. For they were so intensely religious that they could not afford to be Christians; their worship of God was so pure and sincere they could not offend their ideal by bowing even to a mental idol. They sought not to destroy, but to fulfil the demands of the spiritual life, and, like Jesus, they could honestly have proclaimed, "Not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass away." For they knew, as he knew, that the true law is imperishable; it is stamped on every atom of the universe and in every impulse of the human heart.

The discernment of the law and its declaration to the world was the supreme effort of Jesus, as it was that of the antagonists of Dogma one hundred years ago, who were willing to be maligned and traduced if they could but be consistent with their convictions, and leave to mankind the heritage of a rational system of religious truth.

III

The next great phase of antagonism to ecclesiastical authority made its appearance soon after the fierce conflict of the Church with the Deists had spent itself. Since the days of the Reformation it had been the especial business of papal encyclicals

and ecclesiastical councils to denounce in bitter terms each successive advance of the secular sciences. The Church had extinguished the life of Bruno by consuming in flame his martyred body, and silenced Galileo's lips by the fury of relentless denunciation.

But the truths which those champions of learning had revealed could never be obliterated, even though their bodies were crushed beneath the juggernaut of persecution.

What, then, was the nature of the last conflict in which ecclesiasticism engaged, only to suffer one more ignominious defeat? As we have seen, the real cause of the conflict between the Deists and the theologians was the false and offensive interpretation of the relation between God and man. Dogmatic authority insisted on locating Deity wholly without the plane of humanity, refusing to recognize a basis of unity; scouting the doctrine of the immanent or indwelling Deity—the identity of truth wherever in the universe it may be discerned. God was so contradistinguished from man as to appear to be the exact opposite. The corruption of God in man was virulently denounced as blasphemous heresy.

Had the authorized teachers of Christendom understood the God whom they professed to worship they would have discerned the contradiction in terms of their definition of Deity and sought a higher understanding.

They conceived of God as omnipotent, immutable, and eternal. If He be possessed of these qualities, then manifestly he is all-inclusive and there can be nothing in the universe but God.

Therefore man, "the earth and all that is therein," yea, all the universe, is but the manifestation of God, and He is in All and is All. For God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He is the permanent principle and inexhaustible essence of Being; He is that without which nothing is and from which all that is proceeds.

God cannot be one thing in Himself and another thing in man. He cannot be one kind of a God in the Bible and another kind of God in Nature. Truth is universal and forever identical. If there be ought in the world that can be recognized as God it is Truth. And what is Truth? It is the correspondence of the conception with the perception, of the subject with the object, of the idea with the reality. Therefore that can be the only real and true world whose manifestation is in accord with the Divine Idea, and that Divine Idea must be everywhere expressed in the universe or there can be no criterion of Truth and the cosmos would be unrealizable.

Unless God dwelt in man and realized His full and perfect idea of Himself in so-called creation, no possible, just or trustworthy relations could be established between Deity and man or the universe. The God in man is the perfect God—the All-God—or there is no God of whom man can become cognizant. For God is a unit, perfect, complete, whole. He is this or nothing. But if He be perfect He must be without flaw or fault; if He be whole he is indivisible; if He be complete He cannot be scattered into parts; if He be a unit He is ever the same, for a unit is essentially permanent and unvariable.

To condemn man as wholly outcast from God—His exact opposite as night is of day—is, in truth, to say that man has no existence. For if Deity be all, then there can be no opposite except the opposite of all—which is nothing. Either, then, that man, whom theology persists in describing, can have no existence, or its God can have no existence. For "nothing" is all-exclusive—where there is nothing there cannot be anything. And "all" is all-inclusive—for where all is *every*thing there is no room for nothing.

The old theologian is, therefore, logically driven to the conclusion that God is all that is and there can be no opposite—hence, man is the full and perfect expression of God; or that man, being the opposite of God, limits His universality, and He is not, therefore, perfect, infinite, and complete.

Two complete and infinite opposites cannot coexist. Therefore the universe is either complete, infinite, and coextensive with God, or God is not complete and infinite. For if the universe be infinite and yet is not coextensive with God, then there is no room for God, and hence He does not exist. Contra, if God be infinite and yet not coextensive with the universe, then there is no room for the universe, and hence it does not exist. Therefore we must conclude that the universe and God are coextensive and coexistent, hence coincident and identical, infinite and entire. Therefore to study man is to study God. Anthropology becomes theology. Also to study Nature is to study God. Science becomes religion.

From such reasoning we can fully realize the

illogical and absurd attitude of those unlettered dogmatists who hurled anathemas at the progress of scientific research and involved the pure and exalted religion of Jesus in needless and humiliating defeat.

Absurd, indeed, to imagine that the Wisdom of Deity would be limited to the confines of one of the smallest books of earth, subject to the exigencies of time, and the deterioration of usage, and yet could not be discovered in the marvels of Nature or the endless revelations of the universe.

With ludicrous inconsistency these dark counsellors of ignorance ceaselessly chanted the refrain which this book of revelation proclaimed: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge."

Limited by the abortive theory that the Bible was the scientific text-book of Nature, every extra-biblical effort to study natural phenomena was denounced as not only useless, but sacrilegious.

St. Augustine insisted that insomuch as the earth would soon disappear from creation according to the prophetic utterances of the Bible, all effort to study its nature and the phenomena of the heavens was a worthless waste of time. Man should study the Bible only. Nature could teach him nothing concerning which his soul should find any interest.

When Copernicus startled the world by his revolutionary astronomical discoveries, Martin Luther thus referred to him: "People give ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever

must devise some new system, which of all systems is of course the very best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but Sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the *sun to stand still, and not the earth.*"

Certainly this argument was incontrovertible when the Bible was avowedly the infallible and plenary expression of the Divine Will.

Here is the fearful pronunciamento of the Holy Inquisition against the discoveries and consequent astronomical theories of Galileo:

"The first proposition, that the sun is the centre and does not revolve around the earth, is foolish, absurd, false in theology, and heretical, *because expressly contrary to Holy Scripture;* and the second proposition, that the earth is not the centre, but revolves about the sun, is absurd, false in philosophy, and from a theological point of view *opposed to the true faith.*"[1]

Throughout the entire struggle of the human mind to free itself from the trammels of ecclesiastical ignorance and apprehend the discoverable facts of Nature there ever hung suspended the Damocles sword of the inquisitorial anathema and the tyranny of biblical authority.

All this may sound like very ancient history and seem out of place in a modern discussion. Nevertheless it is well to recall these reminders of the retrogressive tendencies of ecclesiasticism, for the age has not yet wholly escaped from these entangling hindrances.

[1] See White, *Warfare between Science and Theology*, vol. i., p. 137.

Says Dr. Andrew White[1]: "Doubtless this has a far-off sound; yet its echo comes very near modern Protestantism in the expulsion of Dr. Woodrow by the Presbyterian authorities in South Carolina; the expulsion of Dr. Winchell by the Methodist Episcopal authorities in Tennessee; the expulsion of Prof. Toy by Baptist authorities in Kentucky; the expulsion of the professors at Beyrout under authority of American Protestant divines—all for holding the doctrines of modern science, and in the last years of the nineteenth century."

Thus we see how very slowly Christian authorities came to realize the tremendous importance, even for religion's own sake, of a profound and thorough knowledge of the universe, which, if there be any God, must be His expression and fulness. Not until recently has it become apparent to them that the exact students of Nature were far more truly the discoverers of the Being and Will of God than ever could be found in the confines of the Book of Revelation.

When Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and La Place scoured the heavens to search for new worlds; when Avagadro and Lavoisier penetrated through infinitesimal forms to unlock the mysteries of chemical affinities and the strange force that held matter in fixed and mathematical relations; the Church, unfortunately, could not understand that instead of seeking to dethrone Deity they were constructing the only rational pedestal upon which an acceptable and consistent Deity could be established.

When, however, the encyclicals of the Vatican

[1] *Warfare between Science and Theology*, vol. i., p. 129.

and the bold resolutions of synods and councils denounced the discoveries of the world's greatest scientists as false because unscriptural, and unscientific because heretical in theology, they but stultifyingly insisted that the God who had revealed Himself in the Bible had not likewise revealed Himself in Nature. That the Bible's God is *sui generis* and Nature can neither voice His purpose nor express His will.

If " the firmament showeth the handiwork of God," it is of a God wholly contradistinguished from the Bible-God; and, though his existence is manifestly revealed in Nature's laws, nevertheless concerning Him the Bible has no revelation.

It is strange that the old theologians did not perceive the drift of their logic and the ironical upshot of their syllogisms.

By insisting that the scientific discovery of Nature's laws was untrue because anti-biblical, they either force Deity to personify a lie (which Jesus says is the exclusive prerogative of the devil—" the father of lies "); or imply that Nature's laws are the true expression of the Divine Mind and that therefore the Bible is false and cannot consequently be the " Word " of an honest God.

But logic, of course, was not the especial equipment of these ancient warriors, whose purpose was simply to maintain the supreme authority of ecclesiastical dogma in every conflict that might arise.

In the great battle which the Church waged against profane science she again suffered humiliating defeat, simply because she misconstrued the

motive and purpose of her antagonist and could not possibly believe in his honesty or sincerity.

But at the present hour the ecclesiastical authorities are engaged in a conflict which is the fiercest of all the ages, because upon its issue depends the very continuance of the Church's existence and the authority of the teaching of those scriptures which are her "rule of faith." The Church fought against the Deists, denying that God dwelt in human reason and conscience. She suffered an inglorious defeat. The Church engaged in conflict against the scientists, declaring that God did not dwell in His own creation, and therefore could not be discovered within its confines. Again she suffered an irreparable defeat. And now we are in the midst of a conflict which we may call the Battle of the Documents.

When, some years since, a mere boy, having scarcely attained maturity, but a profound scholar and erudite Christian, wrote a book on the Christian "evidences," purporting to overthrow all the established convictions of tradition, it sent a shock throughout the confines of dogmatic Christendom which has not yet abated.

It was useless for autocratic dogmatists to scout and ridicule the name of Dr. David Friedrich Strauss, for his work was of such stupendous importance in the world of scholarship that it could not be laughed aside or treated as a jest. It was not an effusion of flippancy—but the life-work of a mighty soul whose earnestness was as intense as his erudition was broad.

The battle inaugurated by that coterie of scholars called, by way of derision, Rationalists (just as the

expositors of the Upanishads were called in the later reforms of the Vedic religion) is still continuing, and every thinking man is forced to buckle on his armor and engage on one side or the other.

It is now nearly seventy years since Dr. Strauss uttered this startling sentence: "It appeared to the author of the work that it was time to substitute a new mode of considering the life of Jesus, in the place of the antiquated systems of supernaturalism and naturalism. . . . The new point of view which must take the place of the above is the mythical. . . . It is not by any means meant that the whole history of Jesus is to be represented as mythical, but only that every part of it is to be subjected to a critical examination, to ascertain whether it has not some admixture of the mythical. The exegesis of the ancient Church set out from the double presupposition: first, that the Gospels contained a history, and, second, that the history was a supernatural one. Rationalism rejected the latter of these presuppositions, but only to cling the more tenaciously to the former, maintaining that these books represent unadulterated, though only natural, history. Science cannot rest satisfied with this half measure; the other presupposition also must be relinquished, and the enquiry must first be made whether in fact, and to what extent, the ground on which we stand in the Gospel is historical. This is the natural course of things, and thus far the appearance of a work like the present is not only justifiable but even necessary."

In 1835, when these words were written, Dr. Strauss was simply making an academical

declaration, intended only for students and investigators, little dreaming that the masses would ever heed his remarks. But when a few years later a second edition was demanded of his *Life of Jesus*, he rewrote it in popular style for the general reader, so sudden had been the revolution in popular interest.

There is even a still more startling illustration of the rapid revulsion of popular opinion from the authority of dogma and creed in the life and writings of Matthew Arnold.

In 1862, Dr. Colenso, Bishop of Natal, wrote his famous *Inquiry into the Pentateuch*. Of the convincing quality of this critical work W. R. Greg (*Creed of Christendom*, p. 11) says: "It is, I think, all but impossible now for any one who has really followed these researches, to retain the common belief in these five books of the Old Testament, as either accurate, strictly historical, or Mosaic—quite impossible after perusing *The Speaker's Commentary* on these same books."

But the year following the publication of Colenso's great work, Matthew Arnold, who afterwards (ten years later) wrote *Literature and Dogma*,—a work even more advanced than Colenso's,—bitterly denounced him for his daring and inconsiderateness.

Says Greg (*Creed of Christendom*, p. 20): "If we wish to measure the progress made in the last few years by the general mind of England in reference to this class of questions, we could not do better than compare what Matthew Arnold has written in 1873 with what he wrote ten years earlier. In 1863 he published in *Macmillan's Magazine* two attacks, singularly unmeasured and unfair, upon the Bishop

of Natal, condemning that dignitary with the utmost harshness and severity for having blurted out to the common world his discoveries that the Pentateuch is often inaccurate, and therefore as a whole could not possibly be inspired; that much of it was obviously unhistorical, legendary, and almost certainly not Mosaic.

"He did not, indeed, affect to question Dr. Colenso's conclusion, but he intimated that such dangerous truths ought to be reserved for esoteric circles, not laid bare before such babes and sucklings as the mass of men consist of. . . . And now the critic himself comes forward to do precisely the same thing in a far more sweeping fashion, and in a far less tentative and modest temper. He avows that the general belief in Scripture as a truthful narrative and an inspired record—as anything, in short, that can in any distant sense be called 'the Word of God'—is quite erroneous; that the old ground on which the Bible was cherished having been cut from under us, those who value and reverence its teaching as Mr. Arnold does, must set to work to build up on some fresh foundation in the minds of men."

It is quite manifest that since Dr. Strauss wrote his epochal work in 1835, a complete revolution has taken place in the world of scholarship and criticism, and to-day scarcely any one can be found who lays any claim to a critical understanding of the Bible who believes in the old conception of its origin and preservation.

The Battle of the Documents is therefore the last battle in which Christian dogmatism fought

stubbornly and blindly, only to sink again in inglorious defeat.

The age of dogmatism and mental slavery has passed; the age of freedom and individual exaltation has come.

We are experiencing in our time a spiritual Renaissance, like to the intellectual Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Those centuries witnessed the resuscitation of the literature, art, and philosophy of ancient Greece. We are to-day witnessing the resuscitation of the spiritual freedom which was the characteristic of the first centuries of the Christian Church.

The Greek theology was founded in the freedom of the individual and the authority of the conscience and reason.

The Roman theology was founded in the debasement of the human reason and the autocratic sway of papal authority. Since the fourth or fifth century the Roman theology has been all powerful throughout Christendom.

Even the Reformation, although it revolted from the authority and dogmatism of the Roman Church, instituted, after its own establishment, a theological autocracy quite as dictatorial and enslaving as that of Rome.

But to-day we are hearing the returning notes of freedom which once rung true in the early days of Christianity.

"Christian theology was the fruit of Greek genius and had its origin in the Greek city of Alexandria. . . . Alexandria had become more thoroughly Greek than Athens in the days of its renown. For

the first time in history thought was absolutely free. . . . In such an atmosphere it was inevitable that the largest hearing should be accorded to him who spoke most directly and powerfully to the heart, the conscience, and the reason of the age. . . . The Christian thinkers in Alexandria gave the outlines of a theology which for spirituality and catholicity could never be rivalled, till in an age like our own, the same condition which made its first appearance possible should make its reproduction a necessity." [1]

Every doctrine of that theology would be condemned by the dogmatism of to-day as the rankest heresy. That theology enabled Justin to declare that there were many Christians in the world before ever Jesus lived ; just as Toland in the eighteenth century insisted that " Christianity was as old as man." Justin declared that Socrates, Heraclitus, and all good men of whatever faith or nationality before the advent of Jesus were as truly Christian as were any of his followers ; that the Christ was a spiritual principle in Nature which found its expression in all human beings to the extent to which their conscience was clarified and their reason enlightened.

And so to-day all Christendom is awaking to the consciousness that God, who is everywhere, indwells in all the thoughts and aspirations of the human soul, whether that soul be found in a Greek, a Jew, a Hottentot, or a Malayan.

Intelligent people now discern the fact that it is better, truer, safer, to promulgate the doctrine of

[1] Allen, *Continuity of Christian Thought*, pp. 33, 34.

the indwelling presence of Deity in humanity than that they should stand in defence of any partial and distorted definition of inspiration.

Even though it could be proved that the Bible is a book whose every syllable and word actually descended from the lips of God (as anciently the superstitious believed), what would that avail for me if the truth were not likewise in my soul a revelation which I could realize and apply in practical life ?

"Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,
But not within thyself, thy soul will be forlorn;
The Cross of Golgotha thou lookest to in vain,
Unless within thyself it be set up again."

Inspiration is worthless, however sublime and poetic, unless it causes the resonance of its utterance to echo in one's own heart, and becomes transmuted into spiritual energy in one's own being.

Here, then, is the great, the immortal, truth which has been in every age the pivot around which all other truths have revolved, which has sustained every intellectual and spiritual Renaissance of history, namely, that God is in us all, in our inmost consciousness, in our thoughts, our dreams, our hopes, our pains; yea, that he is in all nature, in all we see and feel, in every spear of grass and swinging star; in every grain of sand and ray of light;—and that the profounder be our penetration into the dark abyss of Nature or the sacred arcana of our beings the nearer we come to Him and know that He is, as Paul says, " in and above and through us

all," and that in Him we " live and move and have our being."

Such a conception of Deity is not only not anthropomorphic, but it deifies man and Nature, and thrills the universe with a sense of the divine consciousness which makes its every atom and feature sacred as it is beautiful.

PART ONE

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS DOGMAS

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS DOGMAS

CHAPTER I

THE CURSE AND THE RECONCILIATION ; OR ATONEMENT REINTERPRETED

TO those who are acquainted with the primitive origin of religious rites and ceremonies, the history of their absorption into subsequent religious systems is most interesting. The ethnic religions are full of relics and fossils, quaint memorials of a dead and silent past, which suggest thoughts so foreign to the present age that they come to be regarded with superstitious awe, either as monuments of mystic wisdom or as unimpeachable credentials of authority.

Every rite and ritual, every memorial festival, every symbol, vestment, and temple appointment, every sacrament and service in our customary Christian cult had been anticipated ages ago, in many different parts of the world, among religions long since extinct.

In truth, throughout the range of Christian theology, there is no doctrine that has not in some form or fashion been forecast in the religions which antedated Christianity. This recently revealed fact has startled many—causing some to scoff, some to fear, and others to think. Only by attaining the philosopher's mental poise together with the devotionalist's spiritual insight will one be able to bridge over the resulting gulfs of controversy and confusion.

The question which this fact suggests is not "Must Christianity be abandoned?" but "Can dogmatic assumption and mediæval theology be henceforth conscientiously maintained?" We are not to inquire "Is Christianity a forgery and a fraud, a bold plagiarism from buried books of the religious past?" but rather, "Do we yet possess true Christianity? Is not the 'Christianity' which has been popularly proclaimed, a mere theological shell grown thick and hard with age, encrusting the pure gem whose radiance has as yet been revealed to few?"

From this point of view what shall we say of the dogma of the Atonement, assumed to be the chief and distinguishing feature of the Christian religion? Like all the rest of religious dogmatic teachings, it is but the outgrowth of aboriginal conceptions and usages. It is an idea old as the dawn of history, coeval with the birth of man, symbolized in the rites of primeval worship, and revealed in the rocks and relics of archaic lore.

Notwithstanding the indisputable fact that the doctrine of blood-atonement originated outside the Bible, and is aboriginal, human, and pagan in its

inception and evolution, every school of Christian theology ransacks this ancient book to prove the origin, office, and efficacy of the doctrine.

But does the Bible really sanction the modern dogma of blood-atonement, however qualifiedly asserted? Nay, more: does the Bible, as a whole, sanction the religious institution of blood-sacrifices? It is the object of this paper to show that the Bible does not; to show that, first among Christians, Paul himself announces this novel doctrine, and that, too, against a rigid and growing opposition in the early Church. It will also be further shown that Paul's forced interpretation of the ancient Scriptures is without foundation or authority, inasmuch as the legal injunctions on which he rests his deliverances had fallen into desuetude and condemnation in the Jewish system itself, ages before Paul's advent.

The whole "plan of salvation by the blood of Jesus" followed an assumption of the scriptural sanction of the rite of the sacrifice of animals in propitiation for the sins of the Hebrew people.

The writer of the "Epistle to the Hebrews" develops an ingenious argument on this assumed basis: "Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come . . . not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all . . . having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 11, 12). On the supposition of this unknown writer (not unlikely, Paul himself), "the law having a shadow of the good *things* to come, not the very image of the things," the whole array of theologians from Paul to Anselm and from Anselm to Calvin and

the Hodges have founded their stupendous but fictitious scheme of salvation — for the comfort of the few and the despair of the many.

Now was the writer of "Hebrews" correct? Can it be shown that the ancient bloody sacrifices were anticipatory and prophetic of the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God? Can the ancient law be merged into the modern romance?

Let us see. What was this ancient law? Our Hillels point to the Levitical ritual. But was that the *primitive* law among the Hebrews? That the primitive Jews performed sacrifices is, of course, beyond dispute. The story of Cain and Abel affords sufficient proof. But how could it be otherwise, when, as I have already indicated, the whole primeval world was subject to the delusion that material benefits accrued from sacrificial service?

Did the archaic scriptural or Jewish law indicate that the sacrifice affected man's relation to man, or did it but affect man's relation to God? Here is the crucial test.

Naturally, or aboriginally, man regarded God as a factor in human affairs. God, in other words, was his cashier. Heaven was his bank. His deposits were his vows executed in the blood and fat of the sacrifices. Man knew no way to pay his Creator except by returning to him the creatures which for a time He had suffered man to possess. But between man and man a different relationship had grown up. Here had not entered the law of sacrifices, proxy payments, and propitiation, but the stern, rigorous, *and inviolable law of Justice!*

So runs this primitive law: "Thine eye shall not

pity; eye shall go for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, stripe for stripe" (Exodus and Deut.).

The introduction of *liturgical* sacrifices among the Jews is manifestly an abrupt innovation.

The primitive sacrifices were individual; each man sacrificed for *himself* and his household. The Mosaic sacrifices were offered by the *priests* alone. They were offered for the entire congregation, within the Temple, and on set occasions. The Mosaic, or Levitical, sacrifices possessed more of a civic character than the primitive sacrifices. They adjusted the relations between man and man, neighbor and neighbor. Between man and man the primitive law knew only justice. The Mosaic law first introduced forgiveness of sins committed by man against man through the propitiation of the divine and only Judge.

But was the Mosaic law a revelation, an invention, or a plagiarism? It is now well known that the Higher Criticism has fully demonstrated that the Levitical sacrifices were imported from a foreign source, and foisted on the people as a finished and divinely authorized system of religious jurisprudence. Not till after the Babylonian Captivity were the Levitical, or priestly, sacrifices legally established among the Hebrew people. In origin, therefore, these sacrifices were not Jewish but Persian. They sprang not from the Semitic genius but from the Aryan. They were not Mosaic but Zoroastrian. They were not divine, but distinctively human.

Hence it is manifest that the scriptural, or revealed, basis of the central dogma of the Christian

system is abruptly removed. The dogma of the Atonement as expounded by Christian theologians, the very soul of the "plan of salvation," so confidently proclaimed to be a divine revelation, is nothing but a chimerical theological superstructure established on the fragile foundation of a Jewish adaptation of a pagan custom, which the Jewish system itself finally outgrew long before the advent of the Christ.

But the code itself, were it accepted as divine, does not satisfactorily sustain the modern doctrine of the redemption of mankind by the blood of Jesus. There is a weak spot in the Levitical code in so far as it is mustered in to do service for the dogma of salvation by blood. The "scape-goat" episode in the Levitical sacrifices has ever been interpreted by Christian theologians as being distinctively prophetic of Christ's bearing, or taking away, our sins upon the tree. Slight traces of this interpretation are found in the New Testament (John i. 29, and Heb. ix. 28). But this atoning sacrifice was wholly *bloodless*. Nevertheless the priestly and so-called prophetic code (Lev. xvi. 10) distinctly announces that this bloodless offering of the goat was an atonement. The code itself, we see, therefore, clearly allows the remission of sins *without* the shedding of blood.

Thus the logical suggestion and prophecy of this feature of the ancient sacrifices are precisely the opposite of those which are commonly declared in Christian indoctrination. They do not involve the shedding of blood for remission of sins or the civil death of the Messiah for the honor of the law. But even though every feature of the code consistently

and unequivocally sustained the teaching of Christian dogmaticians, nevertheless the history of its ultimate fate would sufficiently demonstrate the absurdity of utilizing it for any prophetic purposes.

The yoke of this alien liturgy soon chafed the people whom it victimized. It had demonstrated its worthlessness as a spiritual agency. It ceased to be an awakener of lofty aspirations. It darkened the door of the Temple with cruel blood. The people became coarse and sodden through the worship of butchery and murder. The glory of the Shekinah was obscured in the smoke of the oblation. The face of the Lord was veiled in darkness. The offerings of blood had ceased to be a "sweet-smelling savor" unto God. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not require. Mine ears hast thou opened." So exclaimed the devout minstrel of Judæa when he passed through suffering into spiritual triumph. "Mine ears hast thou opened" as if to say, "Strange, I beheld not the truth before; but now I see 'burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required'; the rather as 'in the volume of the book it is written of me . . . *thy law is within my heart*'" (Ps. xl.). Again he cries, "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts . . . thou desirest not sacrifice . . . thou delightest not in burnt offering; but the sacrifices of a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise!"

Elsewhere he has God cry out, "I will take no bullock out of thy house. . . . Offer unto God thanksgiving; and *pay thy vows* unto the Most High."

In the vision of the spiritual seers the old law is rapidly vanishing into nothingness. They discern no spiritual triumphs in the priestly shambles drenched with the blood of animals.

In later times another prophet, burdened with the hypocrisy of the vicious service, declares: " Bring no more vain oblations. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices ? Your hands are full of blood." Blood is no more an expiation. Its virtue is gone. The ignorance of the people no longer demands it as a religious expedient. But in the place of " blood " he would substitute the code of ethics: " Put away your evil doings; learn to do well; seek judgment [justice]; relieve the oppressed; plead for the widow."

Do this and trust no more to foolish and degrading sacrifices; then " though your sins be as scarlet they shall become white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall become as wool."

The forgiveness of your sins and cleansing of your heart were not, then, the effects of faith in bloody sacrifices, but of simple obedience to the universal and eternal principles of righteousness, justice, and truth.

I must examine one more passage (Jeremiah xxxi. 29–34) which I discover among the writings of the spiritual potentates whom the Jews were loath to obey. Here will be found a most remarkable declaration. It is a prophecy referring unequivocally to the expected Messianic days. It forestalls the law of life which shall then prevail and even prescribes the very method of salvation the Messiah shall proclaim. We shall see how much it supports

the dogma of salvation by blood: "In those days they shall say no more the *fathers* have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." Does not this effectually dispose of the theory of vicarious suffering or substitutional sacrifice?[1] "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die" (Ezekiel xviii. 20). "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. xxiv. 16, also 2 Kings xiv. 6). The principle of the Messiah's Kingdom, then, shall be that of individual responsibility and absolute justice. A proxy-atonement by one person for all the race seems not even dreamed of.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Here we should expect a clear statement of what that covenant shall be, and there ought to be no dispute, if this writer is regarded as a true prophet, that his description of the character of that covenant is accurate. But he clearly avows that this covenant will not be of the nature of the former covenant, the Egyptian, which was bloody and expiatory, but says that it shall be as follows: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." "For they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: *for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*"! (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34). This clearly sets forth the divine overture of universal salvation, but

[1] See also Ezekiel xviii. 2.

it is free as air and not in a single iota is it tinctured with the taint of a blood-sacrifice or a proxy-atonement. This, then, is the final expression of the highest Jewish conception of the Spiritual Kingdom of the Messiah.

Now what is our surprise to discover that, after the lapse of many centuries, the Christian system reinstates the old Aryan, or Persian, theory of sacrifices! It forgets the prophets and divine singers, and mournfully lapses into effete paganism.

How did this occur? Are the Gospels responsible for this strange relapse? There is not even an honest *hint* of the theory of a blood atonement in the four biographies of Jesus. We need examine only a few passages. John exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God." A mere hint at the ancient law. It is without force. It means, "You once trusted in bullocks and goats and lambs, and they led you into ignorance; now trust him who is the true Lamb of God, who will explain the law and lead you into all truth."

Matthew's expression (xx. 28), "to give his life a ransom for many," is as easily applicable to Socrates, Zoroaster, Sakya Muni, or General Gordon —to every leader and lover of the race who has lived and died for truth.

Matthew's plausible statement (xxvi. 28) that his "blood was shed for many for the remission of sins" is effectually neutralized by the fact that the identical statements in the synoptic Gospels (Mark xiv. 24, Luke xxii. 20) omit the crucial clause "for the remission of sins." In Matthew, therefore, this clause is palpably an interpolation for the benefit of

the Jews among whom this Gospel is said to have been especially circulated.

Therefore we perceive that the New Testament contains not a hint of this theory of salvation until we approach Paul's writings. Here we find it triumphant and frequent. Until Paul it was not preached. Long after Paul's conversion it was little recognized in localities which he had not visited, as is proved by the various gospels, canonical and apochryphal.

Paul was a revolutionist. His own writings reveal this fact. He arrogantly declares that the Gospel which he preaches is the true and only one; if any other man or even an angel from heaven deliver a contrary Gospel he is accursed; nay, such would not be a Gospel, but a fabrication; his own Gospel he received directly from the Lord, and he is avowedly an apostle though "born out of due time." Indeed, Paul waxes more audacious, and even ventures so far as to characterize his doctrines as *his own* Gospel in contradistinction to what others teach. He pre-empts the prerogatives of God Himself, and declares that the Almighty will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, "according to my Gospel"! His teachings shall bind even the judgments of Jehovah. The Jesus Christ of his Gospel sustains some peculiar relation to God's moral economy; his theological attitude is manifestly contrary to that of other teachers who were popular in his day.

For what is Paul contending, and what is his characteristic doctrine? To the Corinthians he elucidates the principles of his Gospel in this wise: "I delivered unto you first of all how that Christ

died for our sins *according to the Scriptures.*" Paul's opponents were chiefly Judaizing Christians. Some regard these sects as ceremonialists, sticklers for the Mosaic law. If this were so, then Paul could easily have met their interference by demonstrating to them that according to the ancient records the blood-sacrifices of the old code were already things of the past and were the objects of divine condemnation. He could have shown them that the Mosaic sacrifices had served a temporary purpose in God's economy, but had proved futile for permanent moral culture. Against such opponents Paul would naturally have presented the sublime spiritual interpretation of the Law which ages before him had been sung by the inspired voices of David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

But Paul proceeds directly in the opposite course. He assumes the necessity of the ancient liturgy. It was a permanent ordinance, and not until the death of Jesus Christ were the ends of the law fulfilled. Then, and then only, was the ancient ceremonial fully honored. Then for the first time had the key to the understanding of the ancient Scriptures been delivered to mankind.

But it occurs to me that the true opposers of Paul were, not the ceremonialists, but the spiritualized Jews,—those who had become saturated with Greek philosophy or Neoplatonism, and had already discerned in the life and death of Jesus Christ a principle far more exalted and uplifting than the crude conception of a legal satisfaction.

It is well known that Philo, who figures in history as an eminently representative Hebrew of that age,

was thoroughly engrossed in Neoplatonism. He represented a school that attempted to explain away all the peculiarities of the Mosaic theology in accordance with the doctrines of the Greek Academy. They were allegorists, and in their hands all Scripture was but a book of symbolical scenes and hieroglyphical figures. They denied the resurrection, and gave little credence to the accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus. Paul feared that the people would be swept away by the specious reasoning of these Gnostics. Therefore he must establish some strong and plausible reasons to show why Christ's death was a necessity. His natural recourse was to those ancient Scriptures which the Jewish Gnostics despised and of which the Greeks remained in total ignorance.

Let it not be forgotten that Paul's preaching was to the Gentiles. His churches consisted of converts who were unacquainted with Jewish lore. The Gnostics who disturbed the faith of his converts were Jews. The Corinthian Church, especially, afforded continual annoyance to its founder. But this Church consisted in the main of the uncouth and unlettered rabble of barbarians. Paul therefore will establish them against all the onsets of Judaizing antagonists by grounding them in the well-worn, logical, and convincing argument that Christ's death was an absolute necessity, based upon the prophecies of the ancient sacrifices, and foretold in all the ordinances of the Temple. Thus originates Paul's stupendous and ingenious plan of salvation. Hence Paul, with such vociferous insistence, declares that his is the only true Gospel. Hence he exclaims, " I

am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

From this point of view Paul's utterances grow very lucid and transparent. Now we can grasp his meaning when he says: "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." But why a stumbling-block to the Jews? Certainly no orthodox Jew could take exception to Paul's interpretation. To the orthodox Jew the death of Jesus, if he believed him to be the prophesied Messiah, would be a very natural incident in his life. Manifestly, therefore, it is to the Jewish Gnostics, the philosophized and Neoplatonized Jews, that the preaching of the Christ crucified becomes a stumbling-block. For through the eyes of their philosophy they studied the Law from the spiritual heights of the prophets of old. The literal sacrifice was to them no longer a necessity. Therefore they saw no reason for the death of the Messiah.

So Paul declares that the crucifixion is to them a stumbling-block. For, as they read Scripture, the crucifixion is not a necessity. Paul would make the Scriptures testify to the necessity of Christ's death. He would utilize Christ's death to testify to the accuracy of the Scriptures. Thus his argument becomes a double-edged battle-axe with which he hews on the one hand the Gnostic Jews and on the other hand the philosophic Greeks. For the death of Jesus is to the latter "foolishness," of course, as they are wholly ignorant of those Scriptures by which Paul seeks to prove its necessity.

But was Paul's interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures justifiable? I think I have sufficiently demonstrated that his specious argument for salvation by blood was proclaimed in palpable disregard and defiance of the highest spiritual interpretation of the ancient Law. Paul's preaching was a renunciation not only of historic Judaism but also of its spiritual evolution. He relapsed into effete paganism. In his theology, therefore, Paul was a pagan before he became a Christian.

I am not unprepared for the attack which will be made upon this conclusion. It will be advanced that, of all the early Christian teachers, Paul himself the most earnestly insisted on a spiritual presentation of the doctrine of the atonement. It will be said that it was Paul, and not the ancient seers, who declared, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." "To be carnally minded is death, to be spiritually minded is life." "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you."

These and many kindred passages in Paul's writings materially modify the gross repulsiveness of many of his dogmatic utterances. Nevertheless we must not be blind to the fact that the glory of these spiritual triumphs, according to Paul's plan of salvation, is only attainable by those who exercise faith in the efficacy of Christ's reconciling sacrifice. For he unqualifiedly insists that there is no other name than that of Jesus Christ under the heavens whereby we can be saved; that we have redemption only through his blood; and that if any man, or an

angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than that which he has delivered, he is already accursed!

And yet Paul's simple declaration of salvation through the death of Christ affords but little foundation for those most grotesque superstructures which have since been reared upon it. On this fragile foundation John Calvin constructed his massive theory. Calvin was as thoroughly blind to Paul's luminous spiritual perceptions as was Paul to the clearer vision of the ancient prophets. And yet, if Paul's simple exposition of faith unto salvation in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ be without sufficient scriptural support, it is superfluous to argue further of the unscripturalness of the modern dogma of the Atonement. Paul's *ex cathedra* utterances should not be sufficient authority to maintain this appalling dogma which has ever filled the world with confusion and despair.

It has parodied justice, scandalized the attributes of God, made love a burlesque, and travestied the common-sense of mankind. What a grotesque picture has it drawn of Deity! More revolting than the painful situation of the Laocoön; more frightful than the snaky-haired Erinyës—the gloomiest nightmare of pagan lore. It pictures God not as a loving Father but as a monstrous demon, a vicious, stony-hearted despot. Assume what theory of the Atonement you please, however mild, if it harbor an iota of the doctrine of vicariousness, legal necessity, or substitutional sacrifice, it is an atrocious libel on an honest God and shocks the unbiased heart of every honest man. This dogma furnished the excuse for ghoulish persecution by Christian

despots for many centuries. In its behalf the genius of persecution invented every instrument of torture. It has taught us not that the blood of Jesus is the unifying principle of the race, but rather that it is the prophecy of that ruddy stream which in defence of mistaken loyalty flowed for ages from the veins of butchered men. Crying mercy, it becomes but the mockery of mercy.

The conception of a God who kills, murders, and damns forever must create a brood of human imitators who will execute His bloodiest decrees. This doctrine of the Atonement is alone responsible for the many thousands of innocent martyrs to the tortures and flames of the Inquisition. Demolish the conception of a blood-sacrifice as a legal necessity in God's government, and you at once shatter the gates of a revengeful hell and raze the walls of a selfish heaven.

Insist upon this dogma and you bestialize God and brutalize man. You teach him not that his fellow-creatures are his brothers — but that every man is his natural enemy. For the elect must ever hoist the standard of blood and cry aloud, " He that is not for us is against us "; " Whosoever believeth not is damned already "!

Therefore the unregenerate are ever outside the walls, wailing and gnashing their teeth. A God who can enjoy such music will not hope to create a finer sense of harmony in His human worshippers. Hence, " He that believeth not is damned " becomes to countless souls the keynote of heavenly hosannas. To-day we see the evil effects of such teachings only in their milder form, because the

doctrine is not sincerely entertained. But in the mediæval ages, when it was the paramount Christian idea, and was honestly dreaded and obeyed, it filled the earth with the clashing sounds of war; it brought indeed "not peace but a sword into the world"; it set father against son, and children against their parents; it infuriated sect against sect, and adopted the sword reeking with a brother's blood as the most potent ensign of the Messiah's reign of peace!

But the dogma is not devoid of evil effects even in our day. Believe that there is but one narrow gateway leading into heaven, that only the elect by faith shall enter therein, then consider yourself by grace or by faith among the elect, and you will at once regard your fellow-creatures not as fortunate as yourself either with arrogant pity or with cold condemnation. All your neighbors will at once be arrayed before you as "sheep" and "goats," and you, in your own estimation, will become the elect bell-wether!

This attitude is demonstrated in the comical zeal of every new young convert. Blind faith hurls him headlong into absurd denunciation of his former friends. All are sinners! How changed are they in visage, form, and figure! He cannot feel for them as he once did—with a heart of natural sympathy; now he can only *pray* for them—that Brutus-dagger that stabs true friendship with its fatal wound! The dogma generates in the human heart selfishness, egotism, hatred, censoriousness, and antipathy. It encourages a spirit of self-indulgence, self-deception, and dishonesty. It suffers one to hug to his bosom the flattering unction of divine

pardon and especial favor, while his heart is still black with sin. He washes the outside of the platter while within it remains unclean and nauseating. He is fain to believe that, if against his name there can be written the magic word "Forgiven," his eternity is secure; and, though a thousand times he sink in sin, if he but utter the talismanic words, "I believe," he is held fast to the throne of God by the unseen chain of redemption.

Not so taught the Galilean Master. When he spake forgiveness, he cleansed, purified, and renewed the heart. Healing always accompanied forgiveness. "Your faith hath made you whole: your sins are forgiven." "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Words are the vehicles of thought. Thought is the energy of mind. Thought is positive force. God thought, and his words were Creation. Christ thought, and His words were cleansing. The cleansing power of the spiritual photosphere still envelops us. The physical sun cleanses the atmosphere of the world, driving the venomous and slimy serpent of miasma before his wheels of light. Likewise may the spiritual sun penetrate the gloomiest abodes of the heart and, letting in the rays of light and purity, drive out the lingering serpents of sin and uncleanness.

The Christ—the spiritual Sun—hovers round this atmosphere of life. Forgiveness is procured and realized not when some divine Judge speaks the word, when the jurisprudence of heaven is exercised in one's favor, but when the life drinks in the radiance of the spiritual spheres; when faith becomes

action, when action is in service of the truth, when truth washes the heart clean and the crown of purity decks the brow of honor. The divine Lord cannot sell indulgences for the price of faith any more than can his presumptuous vicegerents on earth sell them for the price of gold. Forgiveness is not the decree of a court; it is the life of purity, evolved through suffering and obedience. But the popular dogma is the arrogant and self-appointed arbiter of human and eternal fate; damning whom it please, saving whom it please. It is the Medusa-head of a fabulous theology, destroying the natural sympathies of those who gaze upon it, and turning their hearts to stone.

What would befall the race if the conclusions of this paper should be universally recognized and accepted? Would the bud of promise be blighted in the garden of hope before the very eyes of man? Would the wooing lullabies of love be heard no more in the cradle songs of life? Not so; the new faith which is slowly rising into recognition is as much grander and more illuminating than the old as the orient sun excels the splendor of the waning moon.

When, with Dean Stanley, we shall learn to read into that one word "blood" all the force and beauty of life and love; when we shall recognize in the sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus Christ the matchless and inspiring Epic of the struggle of the human soul for the attainment of light, life, and immortality; when we shall discern, cast in mystic halo around his head, all the myths and religious fables of the past striving to reveal through him the key of

their secret teachings, then will the pathetic story of his life and death find a responsive chord in our hearts; then will he become a veritable "high priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

As said Ignatius of Antioch, "The blood of Christ is love." But love is life. When we shall learn to sacrifice this for the good of self, of friend, of neighbor, and the race, then will the scarlet sins of earth speedily whiten to the spotless snow. Blood indeed must needs be shed; but not "once for all" from the veins of Jesus, save in symbolic illustration of a universal experience. Let each human being learn to expend his own heart's blood in forging the bonds of honest friendship; in shaping the figure of a true and lofty character; in willingly wearing the thorny crown till true service shall change it to the purest gold. Then will be realized in each man's life that Atonement which the Christ made symbolically for all the race upon the "accursed tree." Then will the kingdom of righteousness establish "peace on earth and good-will among men."

CHAPTER II

THE GOD WITHIN ; OR, INSPIRATION REDEFINED

THE orthodox indoctrinated student fervently insists that no one can rightly be denominated a Christian who refuses to believe that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. This doctrine has held the sceptre of authority for many ages. It is true, nevertheless, that it is not the primitive Christian doctrine of inspiration, but is comparatively modern.

The common notion regarding the manner of composing the Gospels which prevailed in early Christianity is expressed by John the Presbyter, who is believed to have been one of the Lord's Disciples. He says of the Second Gospel: " Mark wrote it with great accuracy as Peter's interpreter. He committed no mistake when he wrote down things as he remembered them "! (*Vide* Eusebius' *Ecc. His.*, iii., 39). The notion of infallible and verbal inspiration did not assume dogmatic form until the seventeenth century. It was then declared of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament that " it is inspired [*theopneustos*] equally as regards

the consonants, and the vowel points, or at least their force." [1]

The dictum of orthodoxy, however, has long since been modified by varying and confusing qualifications. It still insists upon the infallible inspiration of the Bible, relegating simply the manner or method of inspiration to the investigation of the student.

This chapter is written to challenge and disprove this interpretation of the doctrine. I shall seek to prove, out of the mouth of Scripture itself, and of other competent authority, that the prevailing and accepted dogma is unwarranted either by history, the sacred writings, or philosophy. First, then,

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF INSPIRATION?

There has been a vast deal of word-clashing and hair-splitting over this problem. Dogmaticians have elaborated innumerable differences without distinctions. They have piled up Ossas of qualification on Pelions of explanation till the vision is obscured and knowledge confounded. Out of this confusing mass perhaps the clearest orthodox exposition may be found in the following quotation from an article in Kitto's *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature (in loco)*. "No part of that Holy Book was written without miraculous influences; all parts were equally inspired; in regard to the whole volume the great end was infallibly attained, namely, the commitment to writing of precisely such matters as God designed for the religious instruction of mankind, [By what mysterious pathway did this author thus

[1] McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature.*

confidingly creep into the mind of God to know His thoughts ?]; the sacred penman wrote what had for its object not merely the immediate benefit of individuals or churches but what would be useful to Christians in all future ages; in regard to the most minute and inconsiderable things which the Scripture contains we are compelled to say, this also cometh from God"!

Dr. Leonard Woods, a learned orthodox scholar, in commenting on Dr. Henderson's position as above expressed, and assuming a somewhat more liberal attitude, remarked: "When God inspired different men He did not make their minds and tastes all alike, nor did He make their language alike. Nor had He any occasion for this; for while they had different mental habits and faculties they were as capable of being infallibly directed by the Divine Spirit, and infallibly speaking and writing the truth, as though their mental faculties and habits had been all alike."

It is very manifest that the idea here involved is that a certain chosen set of men (quite infinitesimal as compared with the billions of earth's inhabitants) were set apart by God that in some mysterious manner they might be made the safe instruments through whom He could voice His sentiments; and that these chosen few, alone of all the inhabitants of the earth, perfectly and unerroneously conveyed the thoughts and purposes of the Eternal Father. But we may find in even more recent declarations of Christian teachers assumptions as conservative and unyielding as those of Dr. Woods or Dr. Henderson.

In 1861 Dean Burgon preached in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, as follows: "No, sirs, the Bible is the very utterance of the Eternal: as much God's own words as if high Heaven were open and we heard God speaking to us with human voice. Every book is inspired alike and is inspired entirely. Inspiration is not a difference of degree but of kind. The Bible is filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit of God; yea, the books of it and the words of it and the very letters"![1]

According to the same authority, even here, in free America, we have as stanch defenders of literalism. So eminent a scholar as Dr. Hodge of Princeton exclaims that "the books of Scripture are one and all, in thought and verbal expression, in substance and in form, wholly the work of God, conveying with absolute accuracy and divine authority all that God meant to convey, without human additions and admixtures"; and that "infallibility and authority attach as much to the verbal expression in which the revelation is made, as to the matter of the revelation itself."

Surely, then, these inspired writers must be possessed of some rapt and supersensuous consciousness; of some rare sense of unapproachable superiority and adaptiveness. Could a man be so absorbed of God, in the extraordinary manner contemplated by the above definitions, hold such visible communion, see the very countenance of the Almighty, and hear His holy voice ringing through his being, without instinctively recognizing his

[1] White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*, vol. ii., p. 369.

superior allotment in life's opportunities, and proclaiming with unrestrained joy and exultation the fact that he was the chosen of God above all the adoring masses and worshipping congregations of earth?

The Psalmist at one time breathed somewhat of such exultant consciousness when he exclaimed: "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace . . .; my heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue" (Ps. xxxix.). Or again: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me . . . , and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Ps. xl.). But in Psalm cxliii. on the contrary he seems to speak of his experience as purely natural and often discouraging. He cries out: "My spirit is overwhelmed within me; I meditate on all thy works; I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land."

These words certainly do not sound like the outburst of a soul suddenly possessed of a conscious divine intelligence, superior to that attainable by the majority of the human race and especially endowed for the peculiar and significant uses of the Lord. The soul of the Psalmist apparently is not as conscious of a divine possession as are the souls of our poets when they invoke the inspiration of a "Heavenly Muse." Does not the poet often hear

> Voices pursue him by day,
> And haunt him by night;
> And he listens and needs must obey,
> When the angel says "Write"?

Is not the poet's implied injunction as imperative as the voice of God or the power of the Spirit when ordering the words of the sacred writers ?

" Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you " (Matt. x. 19, 20). This scriptural passage is often regarded as a specific proof of the infallible inspiration of the Apostles, " who had the constant assistance of the Holy Spirit, whether engaged in speaking or in writing, and of course were liable to no mistakes either as to the matter or the manner of their instructions " (Kitto, *in loco*).

But has not every true poet and orator felt as well these kindling fires of the Sacred Spirit, when burst from lips and flowed from pen such spontaneous eloquence and wisdom as in his normal state he could not possibly have created ?

Milton, methinks, reaches an equally lofty consciousness of divine possession and inspiration when he adoringly exclaims:

" Of man's first disobedience . . .
Sing, heav'nly Muse. . . . I
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
. . . while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme ;
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me. . . .
What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low raise and support;

"That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

Here, although Milton seems to feel sufficiently the weight of his great task, he nevertheless does not hesitate to claim as divine an inspiration as the Psalmist, while he assumes as much importance in the purpose of his poetic mission and the achievement of his aim.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION IS,

Did any of the writers of the Bible ever define, or claim for themselves, such extraordinary and significant experiences as we know they would be conscious of if they, of all the people of the earth, were the especial few who were the accepted confidants of the Almighty? There is one event in the Bible that may well afford us the suggestion of what this general experience would have been among the inspired elect. When Mary, the mother of Jesus, according to the accepted records, was informed by the angel Gabriel that she was to become a mother by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, she expressed her amazement, was overwhelmed at first with extreme sadness and then with ecstatic joy, which at last found a tongue in the sublime Magnificat:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

But among all the writers of the Bible we find no

glad acclaim of their conscious and exceptional possession by the Spirit of God, of their intelligent apprehension of the peculiar and significant inspiration above that which is possible to all men; and in their invocation and prayers they ever seem to write and think and sing but as other inspired poets and seers and minstrels in all ages have done. In the face of this fact we ask, Whence came this strange conviction on the part of the believing masses of Christendom that they who wrote these books called the Holy Bible were so inspired to write them that they have ever since constituted an infallible and absolutely perfect volume, in which no error can be traced, whose authority is final and supreme in all the realms of thought and morals, the only Rule of Faith and the unqualified guide of life?

Perhaps we can best appreciate the vulgar popularity of this conception of the Bible by pursuing the course of its historical development. That we may cover the survey of the entire Bible we will begin with

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now we are wont to hear divines declare with most stubborn insistence and certitude that every book in the Old Testament is positively inspired and infallibly true, notwithstanding the fact that the highest scholarship even in conservative ranks is continually taking exception to the canonicity of certain accepted canonical books, *e. g.*, The Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Jonah, and others.

There are many eminent conservative scholars

who unqualifiedly declare that these books should not be classed among the authorized books of the Old Testament canon. Now, I ask, how has such a conclusion been reached? By what means do our modern scholars become wiser than their great ancestors and rise in supposed authority above them?

Because modern scholarship has discovered a curious fact in the historical development of the Old Testament canon which seriously qualifies the entire problem of its accuracy and authenticity. It has been discovered, to begin with, that the ancient Jews held no such ideas of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible as those of our modern Christian theologians. For instance, these theologians put such interpretation upon the dogma of inspiration, as we have seen in the definitions above quoted, that they leave no room for a secondary or semi-authentic inspiration. They claim that all the writers are equally inspired, although the character of the deliverance of such inspiration may vary according to the education or idiosyncrasy of the individual writer.

But the ancient Jewish doctors differed materially from this conception. Maimonides, for example, the greatest light of Jewish wisdom in mediæval ages, distinctly avows that there are at least *twenty-nine different degrees* or stages in the inspiration of the sacred writers. But who can conceive of a variability or gradation in God's infallible wisdom? If, then, God spake in the language and thoughts of the inspired sacred writers, how can there be any gradation or variability in the quality of God's inspiration, that is, in the imparted

infallibility of God's communication? Manifestly, therefore, the ancient Jews held no such ideas about the infallibility of the Old Testament as our present Christian divines insist upon.

When we study still further into our subject we discover that there was only one portion of the Old Bible which the Jews regarded as inspired in the same manner as our modern divines consider that the entire sacred volume, both old and new, is inspired. They so understood only the Pentateuch. Here was authority. Here was infallibility. Mr. Greg, in his *Creed of Christendom*, has said with worthy emphasis: "It will be readily conceded that the divine authority or proper inspiration (using the word in our modern, plain, ordinary, theological sense) of a series of writings of which we know neither the dates, nor the authors, nor the collectors, nor the principle of selection, cannot derive much support or probability from the mere opinion of the Jews; especially when the same Jews did not confine the quality of inspiration to these writings exclusively; when a large section of them ascribe this attribute to five books only out of the thirty-nine; and when they assign to different portions of the collection different degrees of inspiration—an idea quite inconsistent with the modern one of infallibility" (page 80).

Thus far, then, we have discovered that nowhere in the Old Testament is any claim made by the supposed inspired writers to such infallible inspiration as, according to popular theology, we are led to assume that they did claim. If they themselves did not make clear the fact that they were so

overwhelmingly and peculiarly possessed of divine knowledge, what right has any subsequent student of these books to incorporate in these same writings the foreign and illy warranted idea of their absoluteness and infallibility ?

Secondly, we have discovered that the people who anciently were the most concerned in preserving the dignity, integrity, and authority of these noble writings were themselves very unwilling to ascribe to them such a degree of superior knowledge and authority as the much later and far less sympathetic students of modern times insist upon attributing to them.

The very natural conclusion to which we seem to be forced, then, is that the farthest removed and least sympathetic interpretation of modern theologians concerning these disputed books must be erroneous, inasmuch as it is antagonistic both to the purport and intimation of the authors themselves, and to the students of and believers in this Book who were anciently of all people the most nearly allied to and associated with it.

What stupendous audacity pure argumentation has assumed when, ages after a book has been written, it seeks to demonstrate that its origin and purport were absolutely the reverse of what its original authors conceived them to be! But scholarship has revealed even more concerning the historical developments and preservation of this wonderful volume.

The limitations of this chapter will not permit the introduction of minute details. Suffice it to say that we have now learned that the text of the Old

Bible, as it has been preserved to us through all the Christian centuries, acquired but a comparatively recent authority as the final and absolute canonical text. We now know that the Synagogue of Jamnia, in about the first Christian century, under the leadership of Rabbi Akiba, determined upon the selection of the Hebrew masoretic text as we now have it, and ordered all other texts then extant to be destroyed. The result is that there is not a single variation or uncertain letter in the entire Hebrew text of the Old Bible.[1] This is remarkable, if not amazing, when we recall that there are at least fifty thousand discrepancies between the different Greek texts of the New Testament manuscripts. We may, therefore, justly suppose that there were very many differences existing between the texts of the old Hebrew manuscripts, before this astute Rabbi merged them all into one.

Indeed, this latter insinuation has been demonstrated almost to a certainty by what is known as the Septuagint translation, a Greek rendering of the original Hebrew text which was made nearly three hundred years before the birth of Christ. There are so many differences existing between this translation and our accepted Hebrew text that they give rise to much discrepancy and confusion.[2]

Therefore we are permitted by historical evidence to claim no more for our present Hebrew Bible than that its text was determined upon,[3] and at the same

[1] See W. R. Smith, *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, p. 74; also Briggs, *Biblical Study*, p. 130, for various authorities.

[2] See Briggs, *Biblical Study*, pp. 151 *seq.*

[3] At Jamnia A.D. 70. See W. R. Smith, *Old Testament in Jewish Church*, pp. 172 *seq.*, and 412 *seq.*

time freely interfered with [1] and in places absolutely garbled,[2] by purely human and in no sense inspired Hebrew Rabbis and teachers, no earlier in the ages than in the first century of our present epoch. Does it not then seem almost farcical to claim absolute and imperative obedience for this Book, as though in every particular it were the voice of God, ordered to be printed by His holy command, and feared as if it were literally His very rod and sceptre overshadowing our disobedience ?

The simple truth is that this Book was manufactured as all other books have been; only that its key is pitched to a higher note of inspiration and sublimity than ordinary literature. It imparts to the soul a holy zeal, while it is perused, merely because the thoughts that breathe and words that burn upon its every page emanated from profound and earnest spirits who wrote out of their own deep experiences their songs of sorrow and melodies of gladness. It thrills because the minds of those who wrote were thrilled with lofty visions and the voicings of a sublime prophetic future. They were the true seers because they caught a foreglimpse of the hope of suffering hearts, and from the promontory of their exalted lives, purified through pain, they beheld the promised paradise. They

Dipped into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw a vision of the world and all the wonder that would be.

But they saw as any human soul may see who

[1] Briggs, *Biblical Study*, p. 156.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 126, for authorities.

lives in the Temple of Truth and abides under the shadow of purifying love. They wrote as any heart would be inspired to write which had been washed in the blood of persecution and oppression, of slaughter and crucifixion, for truth's and righteousness' sake; as any one would sing who would willingly suffer martyrdom if but the glorious orb of wisdom arise to shine upon a benighted world through the melting hues of divine and hallowing mercy.

Thus far in our study we have been dealing chiefly with the Old Testament. We have learned that the old idea of its inspiration and infallibility cannot face the advances of modern scholarship and maintain itself. But before leaving this branch of the subject I should like to review a few more passages of the Bible which are ordinarily believed to emphasize the claim of the authenticity of the ancient Scripture.

There are, for instance, passages where Moses or Joshua is commanded to write down certain events or laws in a book. This has been claimed as a sufficient showing that the Pentateuch was the work of Moses. But it cannot be demonstrated from these passages that Moses did more than write the law which was to become the moral and ceremonial code of the inchoate nation. This much Moses himself did possibly indite.

But as to the authorship of the entire Pentateuch and the poetical and historical books, Spinoza's bold conjectures several centuries ago no doubt approach the truth. He held that " Moses could not have written the Pentateuch, and that the historical books

from Genesis through the books of Kings constitute one great historical work, a conglomeration of many different originals by one editor, probably Ezra, who does not succeed in a reconciliation of differences and a complete and harmonious arrangement. The books of Chronicles he places in the Maccabean period. The Psalms were collected and divided into five books in the time of the second Temple. The prophetical books are a collection of different fragments without regard to their original order" (see Briggs' *Biblical Study*, p. 197). This is in the trend of modern scholarship, and his analysis of and insight into the original structure of the Old Testament so long in anticipation of modern development is quite surprising. But the reader may discern for himself certain hints in the Old Testament as to

ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Josiah the good King (2 Kings, chap. xxii.) reigned in the seventh century before Christ. During his reign it is said his priest made a marvellous discovery, nothing less than the finding of the Law in the unfrequented recesses of the neglected Temple. A great feast is proclaimed and a solemn covenant engaged in by all the people to re-establish and uphold the Law. Now, how could it be possible that all memory of a law which had become so thoroughly inwoven in the civic fabric and practical intercourse of the people could have been so utterly obliterated within a period of seven hundred years?

When we recall the fact that the original

law was said to have been written amid surroundings of unparalleled grandeur upon a tablet of stone, and that this event was solemnized and preserved in tabernacle and temple, and its glory repeated in song and prophecy from generation to generation, how can we believe that every vestige of this ancient register of deeds and legal lore could have utterly passed out of the minds alike of king and priest and people? When we consider the twelve imperishable Tables of the Roman Law, the indestructible unwritten Law of England, and recall the fact that any legal enactment or social and civic usage which becomes woven into the every-day transactions and common relations of life has been in all modern experience inerasable from the memory of man, the story of the sudden discovery and reinstitution of the ancient Mosaic Law becomes wholly incredible.

We are safe in saying, therefore, that the establishment of these ancient ceremonial laws cannot be traced further back than the seventh century before Christ; and by a careful reading of the book of Nehemiah we shall doubtless be compelled to agree with modern criticism and place the books of the Old Testament, in anything like the form in which we now have them, not earlier than the fifth or sixth century before Christ. This date, however, must apply only to the earliest of the historical books, for many of the other books are thrown far forward in history and become comparatively modern compositions.

We see, then, how plainly ridiculous is the hue and cry which a crumbling conservatism uplifts while

being undermined by the continuous burrowings of scientific scholarship. The reactionary onslaught of orthodoxy, denying the right of fellowship to those who reject the conclusions of an antiquated criticism when applied to sacred writings, will be of no avail in quenching the tremendous enthusiasm of modern research, and the irresistible determination to bring to light every iota of evidence which will explain their mysterious origin, and enable all honest students to wrest them from libellous distortion and finally to establish their place in literature where they will become intelligible, verifiable, and practicable.

Let us now turn to the question of the

INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Our method of study will be similar to that which we have pursued in searching for the evidence concerning the composition of the Old Testament. We therefore repeat that if the writers of the New Testament believed and realized that they were in an especial and unparalleled manner inspired of God to utter such truths as were never before conceived by the human mind, they themselves would be so conscious of this conspicuous experience as to declare it in language unequivocal and indisputable.

We well know that Paul—and no less Peter—never hesitates to dilate upon his marvellous experiences, as, for instance, when he was overcome and fell blind in the presence of the resurrected Jesus upon the Damascus road; when he was caught up into the third heaven and saw and heard things

unspeakable, etc. Why, then, if he so carefully particularizes all his especial spiritual experiences, does he not clearly and unqualifiedly emphasize this one, which would assuredly be the sublimest and most incontestable of all his rapturous revelations?

He does not, however, say that he was so possessed by the Holy Ghost that he could utter nothing but what was absolutely true and which came from God Himself. Yet certainly Paul would have said this if he had been conscious of it as an actual intelligent experience. However, that we may be sure of our ground and not assume more than we can demonstrate by procurable evidence, let us resort to conservative orthodox authors and discover their opinion in regard to the position we have assumed.

As to the claim of authentic inspiration by the authors of the Gospel narratives, Dr. Thomas Arnold in his *Christian Life* distinctly affirms his inability to discern the claim. "I must acknowledge that the scriptural narratives do not claim this inspiration for themselves," he says. Coleridge, in his *Confessions*, says: "I cannot find any such claim made by these writers either explicitly or by implication."

Indeed, the personal motives of the writers of the Gospel narratives are so clearly revealed in Luke's singular exordium to his own Gospel that it were well to review his statements. He says: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most assuredly believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eye-witnesses

and ministers of the word [an implication that these eye-witnesses left no orderly but perhaps fragmentary writings]; it seemed good to me also, having [. . . been commanded of God and infallibly guided and instructed by the Holy Ghost? Oh, no!] had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order," etc.

What is the implication here? Manifestly, that it was the custom in those days to write what one knew about Jesus, either by personal observation or by hearsay, and that such inscriptions were purely human and unguided by any special divine oversight, save only as any good man may be guided who gives himself to a pure and noble undertaking. How absurd, then, in the face of Luke's explanation of his own motives and purposes in writing his narrative is the claim of its absolute divine guidance and invulnerable infallibility! How absurd such language as Dr. Henderson uses, which I quoted in the beginning of this chapter: "In regard to the most minute and inconsiderable things which the scripture contains we are compelled to say, This cometh also from God"! But as to

THE APOSTOLIC WRITINGS,

Mr. Greg (*Creed of Christendom*) well says: "There are, scattered through these, apparent claims to superhuman guidance and teaching, though no direct assertion of inspiration. It is, however, worthy of remark that none of these occur in the writings of any of the writers who were contemporary with Jesus and who attended his ministry

—in whom, if in any, might inspiration have been expected; to whom, if to any, was inspiration promised. It is true that we find in John much dogmatic assertion of being the sole teacher of truth and much denunciation of all who did not listen submissively to him; but neither in his epistles nor in those of Peter, James, or Jude, do we find any claim to special knowledge of truth or guaranty from error by direct spiritual aid." Elsewhere he pointedly puts the issue thus: "The question asked by inquirers and answered affirmatively by the current theology of Christendom is, 'Did God so confer His Spirit upon the biblical writers as to teach them truth and to save them from error?' If He did, theirs is the teaching of God; if not, it is the teaching of man. There can be no medium and no evasion" (*Creed of Christendom*).

We shall discover that there are but a limited number of passages in these Apostolic writings which make the apparent claim to inspiration referred to.

In the first chapter of Galatians, Paul delivers his certificate of recommendation as an inspired Apostle. He says: "I certify that the Gospel which was preached of me was not after man—but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." He then says that after he was smitten down on the way to Damascus he went not to the Apostles at Jerusalem but to the wilderness of Arabia, then returned to Damascus, when, after a period of three years, for the first time he went to Jerusalem and met with Peter. Now, before critically examining this passage we cannot refrain from comparing it with another recorded

saying of Paul with which in my opinion it is utterly impossible to reconcile it.

In the twenty-second chapter of Acts Paul is making his defence and gives a very detailed and minute account of his conversion. He there says that after he was smitten on the way he was commanded (v. 10) to go into Damascus: "and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." This is certainly contradictory of his statement that he was not instructed of man; especially when the very man ("Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews") was indicated as the person who should instruct him!

But a more damaging discovery is that there is a flat contradiction between Paul's assertions in Gal. i. 17, 18, and Acts ix. 26 to 28. In the former passage he positively asserts: "Neither went I up to Jerusalem—but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus; then after three years I went up to Jerusalem." But in Acts ix. the narrator declares that Saul (Paul) came to Jerusalem and was set upon by the Jews, but Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles, and declared how he had seen the Lord in the way, etc. This palpably refers to Paul's (Saul's) experience immediately following his departure from Jerusalem, while yet "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" he sought the dwellers of Damascus "that he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." What, then, becomes of Paul's unqualified declaration that he did not at that time go up to Jerusalem and not until after a sojourn of three years in the wilderness of Arabia? Until

these two contradictory statements concerning Paul's conversion are reconciled there can be no especial emphasis placed on his insistent declaration that inspiration came " by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

These discoveries are enough to destroy any claim to inspiration if the passage really claimed it. But if it proves anything in the way of special inspiration for Paul it proves entirely too much. For out of the words of Paul's own mouth we shall be able to prove that if he was truly and infallibly inspired, then Peter, Barnabas, and others were lamentably at fault in making similar claims for themselves. In Gal. ii. 11–14 Paul makes a ruinous admission. There he says he withstood Peter to his face at " Antioch " " because he was to be blamed "—he "dissembled " and " walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel "; and intimated unequivocally in verse 16 that Peter taught that men were to be saved by the works of the Law and not simply by " the faith of Jesus Christ." [1]

Here, then, is an evident admission by Paul that he was preaching a Gospel which was very distinct from and averse to that of some of the other Apostles. This fact is made still clearer by Paul's constant reiteration of what he insists on calling " my Gospel." He would not insist upon such a claim if he

[1] The entire argument of Paul set forth in Galatians ii and iii. is against the doctrine of salvation by works, which Peter apparently had, by his acts (ii. 11–14), been upholding. Peter dissembled, first eating with Gentiles, till, after an apparent rebuke from James, he separated himself and would make it appear that if he violated the law by eating forbidden things, he could not obtain the salvation of Jesus. It is this inconsistency in Peter which Paul is rebuking while denouncing his apparent doctrine of salvation by works.

were not provoking an attack upon the Gospels of others which were seeking recognition in opposition to his own.

Hence we are forced to decide that if Paul was infallibly inspired then the other Apostles, for whom equal infallibility is claimed, must be admitted to have been merely human authorities. If Paul was directly instructed by God what to do and say, then Peter could not also have been so instructed, for if he had, he never could have made himself obnoxious to Paul and the subject of his condemnation. But if one stone is removed from the foundation of the structure of the dogma of infallibility, then the entire structure falls to the ground. There can be no partly inspired and partly uninspired portions of the Bible, if all is equally inspired and it must ever be said even of its most inconsequential passages that " these too come from God."

But a curious and suggestive section of 1 Corinthians (vii. 6–15) calls for special examination. This passage is often used to prove that it was Paul's very evident intention to be understood, by all his followers, as a special subject of infallible inspiration. But we shall here discover another illustration of how often that which apparently affords the very foundation of an argument becomes, on more studious investigation, but the support of its exact opposite. I think I shall be able to show that, instead of this passage proving the infallibility of Paul's inspiration, or that of any of the others for whom infallibility is claimed, on the contrary it forces the irresistible conclusion that Paul himself entertained no such notion of

inspiration as is demanded by our modern divines. Let us investigate this curious passage.

Paul is called upon to solve a great problem. Evils had crept into the Church because perverted sentiments concerning the necessity and sanctity of marriage had been promulgated among the members. Paul was confronted with two serious questions: first, whether Christians should marry at all, and second, if after marriage it is discovered that they are unequally yoked, some believing and some disbelieving, whether they should continue united or should separate? Now, in answering these questions, Paul assumes two modes of authority: first, "by permission," that is of his own accord; and second, "as commanded of the Lord."

But is it not unintelligible, if not stupid, to assume that a man who believed himself to be absolutely and definitely instructed of the Lord concerning any of life's great problems, would, while declaring the will of God, venture to interpolate and commingle therewith his own views? Would it not be sacrilege and blasphemy for a man who had such familiar access to the Lord that he could receive wisdom freely and without upbraiding for the mere asking, to confuse the utterances and instructions of the Almighty by the interpolation of his own personal conceptions at the very moment when one of the most momentous of all of life's problems was confronting him? For it must not be forgotten that it was not any matter of minor importance regarding which Paul seems to be willing to interlard his own views while proclaiming the Lord's will relating to a kindred topic.

Is it not an equally solemn and responsible duty to advise the young who are anxiously applying for knowledge whether it be wise and spiritually proper to marry, as it is to advise those who are already married whether under certain circumstances it be right or wrong to separate? Nevertheless, concerning the former Paul assumes to render his own opinion, without so much as seeking from God any superior information, while concerning the latter he professes to be directly instructed by God.

Now, it must be manifest to all that a man who so wrote and spoke could not have honestly and seriously entertained any such notion regarding inspiration as that which orthodoxy assumes to be the only correct interpretation thereof.

But a still more detailed investigation of this curious passage will reveal a fact which is not apparent on the surface and which I do not remember to have seen elsewhere exploited.

I think I can demonstrate that when Paul says he speaks "by commandment of the Lord" he means nothing more in his heart of hearts than that when Jesus was on the earth he taught in like manner himself. This will become very apparent when we examine all of Paul's teachings and discover that he uses this expression only when he is reiterating Christ's earthly sayings. Never does Paul use this expression when delivering an original opinion, but in such cases he makes it very clear that he means to speak merely as man to man.

That we may better understand the important contention I am here introducing, let us study this very passage in detail. He is advising about the

propriety of divorce. He says that he is commanded of God to teach that the wife shall not "depart from her husband. But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife." Now, we know very well that this teaching does not accord with Christ's instructions as recorded in Matthew concerning the propriety of divorce, but it does concur with Luke's record. In Matthew, Jesus allows one cause for divorce (adultery or fornication), but in Luke he allows none. There, marriage is absolute and indissoluble. Now, it is admitted in scholarship that Luke's Gospel is a reflection of Paul's preaching and teaching; that Luke was himself a disciple of Paul, and doubtless refers to him in his exordium as being one of the "eye-witnesses" from whom he procured accurate information.

Manifestly, then, when Paul declares that he is commanded of the Lord, he merely means to convey the inference that he had learned that when the Lord was upon the earth he himself had taught in similar fashion. Therefore, in regard to this particular "inspired instruction" concerning the propriety of divorce he was but giving that version of Jesus' teaching which, according to tradition, prevailed in that region where Paul was converted and preached. There apparently seems to be no other possible just construction of this section of Paul's teaching. It seems to me that scholars will henceforth be forced to declare that this passage, so long held up as a strong bulwark of evidence in support of absolute and infallible inspiration, must

be surrendered to the antagonists of orthodoxy. In this special declaration by Paul of his supposed inspiration by God he is merely contending that his instructions are the same as were those of Jesus and they are therefore to be obeyed as "commanded of God."

It remains for us to examine but one more passage, which has long been regarded as sufficient evidence of divine inspiration. I refer to 2 Tim. iii. 16: "All scripture is given by inspiration," etc. Of course it must be apparent that this proclamation can have reference alone to the ancient scriptures of the Jews, for there were no Christian scriptures when this was written; and is therefore not relevant to the present discussion concerning the inspiration of the New Testament. We have, however, already discovered that the Jewish conception of inspiration was wholly diverse to that of modern Christian orthodoxy. Hence, at best, this special text should have little weight in its general bearing on the question of inspiration. But it has been made to do valiant and aggressive service. Quoting from McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature* (*in loc.*) I find the following: "But . . . there is evidence still more specific in the writings of the Apostles. Particularly in one passage (2 Tim. iii. 16) Paul lays it down as characteristic of 'all scripture' that it 'is given by inspiration of God'; and from this results its profitableness."

Apparently this author has lost sight of the fact that this passage could not refer to all of what the Christian understands as scripture, from the fact that when the passage was written there existed, as

I have above said, no Christian scriptures.[1] But, quoting further: "The doctrine which is plainly asserted in the text under consideration, and which is fully sustained in the current language of the New Testament, is, that all the writings denominated the scriptures are divinely inspired."

How strange all this sounds now in the presence of the newer scholarship which has completely demolished this famous passage as a successful weapon in the hands of polemical orthodoxy! The New Testament Revisers of 1881 impliedly now make us read this passage as follows: "Every scripture *which is inspired* is profitable," etc. With the downfall of the authority of these few words falls the entire and magnificent structure of infallible inspiration. For this was the only specific passage that seemed distinctly to declare that the scriptures were written under the especial care and guidance of God.

We have now reviewed every passage of any importance and prominence which can even apparently furnish any proof of inspiration. Are we not a little amazed to discover how limited the passages are, and when exposed to the white light of modern scholarship how completely their force is dissipated, so far, at least, as their support of orthodoxy goes? But many may suppose that we are now entering upon dangerous ground. Many doubtless fear we

[1] When Paul wrote this Epistle even the canon of the Hebrew (O. T.) books had not yet been established. The text was in a confused condition and the Jewish Councils had not yet accepted, as final, the Masoretic text, or even the Old Testament books which should constitute the authorized canon as it is to be found in our Bibles to-day.

are so thoroughly throwing away all safeguards of inspiration that there will be no virtue left in our Bible.

But when we recall that this Bible has been the inspiration and solace of many of earth's noblest souls who accorded it no mechanical inspiration nor worshipped it as an idol, but loved and lauded it, adored and obeyed it, because of its intrinsic value, its lofty sentiment, its ennobling impulses, and its divine beauty—then we will realize that Truth is ever her self-sufficient expositor; and that if the Bible is influential and world-wide in its power, it is not because it is infallibly and mechanically inspired, but because it is replete with truth and permeated with divine and hallowed love.

Surely conservatives would be loath to deny that the early Christian fathers were devout followers of the Bible and were inspired by its truths; nevertheless we have already shown that many of them entertained no such ideas of inspiration as some would still insist that we must accept. We read, for instance, that so revered and learned a Christian father as Justin Martyr believed that "Socrates had known Christ; though but in part, for Christ was and is the Divine Reason which is universally diffused. God had revealed Himself to the Heathen world as well as to the Jewish people, and He had done so through His Son who is the Divine Reason in every man."[1]

Another famous Christian father, Lactantius, reveals the loose idea of inspiration in the early Church when he says: "If there had been any one

[1] *Vide* Allen, *Continuity of Christian Thought*, p. 20.

to collect the truth that was scattered and diffused among the various sects of [heathen] philosophers and divines into one, and to have reduced it into a system, he would not have differed from us who are Christians."

Faustus, a devout Christian though a heretic, believing in the scriptures though refusing the vulgar interpretation, says in his famous reply to Augustine (in the fourth century): "It is an undoubted fact that the *New Testament was not written by Christ himself nor by any of his Apostles*, but a long while after their time by some unknown persons who affixed to their works the names of the Apostles or such as were supposed to have been their companions." [1]

We see, then, how needless is the cry of polemical orthodoxy that they are not Christians who do not believe that the Bible is an absolutely and infallibly inspired book. The Bible will ever retain its position of honor and power, of influence and attractiveness, because of its own intrinsic merits. These will ever live despite all criticism and ridicule. But its over-zealous friends who are so determined to make mankind accept all—all of the Bible—as infallibly and mechanically the work of God, or procure the benefit of none of it, are doing more to discredit the popular value and practical use of this volume than an army of avowed infidels.

Let the Bible stand on its own merits or let it fall. Nothing but its merits can save it from falling. This padding and upholstering process, this bolstering and kneading on the part of orthodoxy to make

[1] *Vide* Dr. Lardner on *Credibility of Gospels*, vol. ii., p. 221.

the Bible presentable to scholarship and science, is all of no avail; the Bible must be its own defender or it has none, and all the efforts of orthodoxy to assist it are simply retroactive and ineffectual.

As the result, then, of this study of the Bible's inspiration, I suggest the

FOLLOWING SIXTEEN THESES

as a survey of the entire field:

1st. The ancient claim of inspiration was that every word, syllable, and letter in the canonical books was literally delivered by God to man, and therefore was the very word and thought of God Himself.

2d. Slowly the claim was shifted concerning certain portions of the earlier historical books, to the effect that there were certain documents in existence before the biblical writers began to indite God's thoughts; but that inspiration directed them to these documents, pointing out which were authentic and to be accepted, which spurious and to be rejected.

3d. At first it was claimed that the Old Testament was absolutely impregnable against all attacks and criticisms of scholarship,—historical, scientific, philological, geographical, etc.

4th. Slowly the biblical defenders were forced by aggressive research and scientific scholarship to admit the fact of existing errors of different character and degree; but they assumed that these were not in the original texts but were unwittingly introduced through the faults of uninspired copyists.

5th. Suddenly the conservative defenders were overwhelmed by the discovery that our Hebrew Bible does not contain the original manuscripts; but was constructed from various originals, put into one text by the Jewish teachers in the first Christian century and promulgated as the true canonical Bible.

6th. This fact utterly destroyed all claim of the Old Testament, as we now possess it, to absolute authority and invariable infallibility, as a revelation from God.

7th. As to the Gospels of the New Testament, it was originally taught that they contained the only accepted history of Jesus which was ever written or ever read by the early Christians.

8th. Now we know that primarily there were innumerable Gospels concerning Jesus, which are now known as apochryphal, but many of which were originally accepted as authentic and correct (see introduction to Luke's Gospel).

9th. The Gospels, as we now have them, were not accepted as authentic or canonical until the fourth century after Christ.

10th. The highest criticism now proves that the Gospels were not written at all by any of the authors to whom they are attributed.

11th. All criticism now admits that these Gospels, as now known, were not written at any one time, but were slowly developed by many writers during the period of the first one hundred and fifty years after Christ.

12th. It was once argued that if our Gospels were destroyed we could replace them almost in their

entirety by the quotations therefrom in the works of the Christian fathers of the first and second centuries. This argument is now absolutely exploded.[1]

13th. Criticism now establishes that originally there was very little written down about Jesus; that there first existed certain traditional writings, long since extinct, from which our four Gospels were made up by slow development.

14th. Criticism therefore compels us to admit that we cannot take any and every statement in the Old or New Testament as absolute, but that the entire story of Jesus must be examined elsewhere, and only that accepted as true which history does not force us to declare untrue.

15th. Therefore the statement that the Bible is an infallible book of divine revelation to humanity, an unqualified and undeviating guide to faith and practice, and the only book in all the world containing a so-called revelation, is unhistorical, uncritical, and undeniably false.

16th. The true explanation of the Bible will be found only when it is accepted as a national literature, revealing the deepest thoughts of a serious people, and ofttimes voicing sentiments which may truly be said to be inspired by the thrill of a divine afflatus, but inspired only as all men may be who will place themselves in the temple of Truth and become ministers of Love and Mercy.

[1] See *Supernatural Religion.* 2 vols.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLT OF REASON OR THE REHABILITATION OF FAITH

ONE of the most serious discussions of the hour concerns a correct definition of the term "Christian." In this age of theological disturbances, ecclesiastical revolutions, and swift demolishment of ancient institutions, it behooves us to inquire, "What will be the effect of such destructiveness? What will be left standing after the battle-smoke is blown away, amid the débris and ruin of these long-contested fields?" With the surrender of the ancient dogma of inspiration it seemed to many of the leading teachers of Christendom that the Bible would be dethroned and Christianity demolished.[1]

[1] "But once aware that much of their Bibliolatry depends upon ignorance of Greek and Hebrew, and often depends upon peculiarity of idiom or structures in modern tongues, cautious people begin to suspect the whole. Here arises a very interesting, startling, and perplexing situation for all who venerate the Bible; one which must always have existed for prying, inquisitive people, but which has been incalculably sharpened for the apprehension of these days by the extraordinary advances made and being made in Oriental and Greek philosophy. It is a situation of . . . much more than scandal, of real grief, to the profound and sincere among religious people.

"As late as 1889 one of the two most eloquent orators of the Church of England, Canon Liddon, preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral, used in his fervor the same most dangerous argument: that the authority of Christ himself, and therefore of Christianity, must rest on the old view of the Old Testament; that since the Founder of Christianity, in divinely recorded utterances, alluded to the transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, to Noah's ark, and to the Flood, as well as to Jonah's sojourn in the whale, the biblical account of them must be accepted as historical or that Christianity must be given up entirely."[1] But in such a discussion all depends upon the definition of terms. Hence I ask, "How shall we define the term 'Christian'?"

A clerical gentleman of prominence with whom I once held a public discussion gave the following clear and precise statement of his understanding of the term, which certainly leaves but little room for consolation to the heretic: "A Christian is one who believes in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and in salvation through his atoning blood; who follows

On the other hand, viewing the Bible as the Word of God, and not merely so in the sense of containing a revelation of the most awful secrets, they cannot for a moment listen to the pretence that the Bible has benefited by God's inspiration only as other good books may be said to have done. They are confident that in a much higher sense, and in a sense incommunicable to other books, it is inspired. Yet, on the other hand, as they will not tell lies, or countenance lies, even in what seems the service of religion, they cannot hide from themselves that the materials of this imperishable book are perishable, frail, liable to crumble, and actually *have* crumbled to some extent, in various instances."—De Quincey's essay on *Protestantism*.

[1] White, *Warfare between Science and Theology*, vol. ii., p. 369.

Christ as Lord and Master and who accepts the Bible as the inspired Word of God. One who denies these essential doctrines of Christianity is not a Christian, just as any one denying the central doctrines of any of the religions of the world has no right to call himself by the name of that religion."

The above is the popularly accepted definition of the term under discussion, and I find that even liberal teachers of the Christian religion are frequently unable to free their minds from the confusion which results from refusing to separate the Christian life, as a fact, from the definitions of such a life expressed in the theological terms of the creed. And yet who can deny that the whole purpose of Christ's career and teachings was to evolve in the individual the life of the Christ, regardless of all secular definitions or theological interpretations?

This chapter is written with the hope of proving that a man's belief neither makes him a Christian nor a Buddhist, any more than it makes him an African or an Indian. His belief may be never so thoroughly in accord with the most accepted standards and yet he may be as far removed from the true Christianity as if he were as ignorant as the most degraded aborigines. Belief in Jesus may result in the experience of that life which was the purpose of Christ's mission. But it is possible for one to have attained the most exalted of Christian lives and still never to have heard the name of Jesus.

Here is the crucial distinction of which the theological world seems totally to lose sight, notwithstanding that upon this very distinction rests the

honor of Jesus and the glory of his Church. I insist, therefore, that theologically one may be classified according to his belief, but that religiously (*i. e.*, according to his spiritual apprehension) the criterion of classification is totally different.

If there was anything magnanimous in the career of Jesus it was not in any supposed effort to exhibit his own exalted life, that his name might be glorified, but to cause the evolution of individual lives to such ultimate exaltation that all mankind might be uplifted and human habits be transformed from hatred to love, from avariciousness to righteousness. I still further insist that from a study of the sayings of Jesus it can be clearly proved that with him the end was everything, the means nothing; that the apprehension and attainment of the life was the supreme motive of all his teaching; how that life was to be attained (whether by the Path of the Buddha or the "Narrow Way" of the Sermon on the Mount) not entering seriously into his consideration.

Nevertheless, upon such a slender thread of differentiation hang the opposing parties of the theological world. From this small cloud have evolved the stupendous storms of theological controversy in all the past.

This chapter will seek to answer the question, "Can the definition of a Christian above enunciated be scripturally maintained?"

My first reference will be to an especial event in the career of the Master when a singularly inviting opportunity was presented to him authoritatively to decide the very point in issue. His mother and brothers, in the flesh, are seeking him and asking

for an audience. Responding to the messenger, he asks suggestively, "Who are my brethren?" Now, fortunately he answers his own question and solves the enigma. What is his reply? Does he say, "They are my brethren who accord theologically with my teachings"; or "They who define God or the Law as I do"; or "They who construe the Sabbath or the uses of the Shew Bread precisely as I do"? Nay, more, does he say that they are his brethren alone who accept unqualifiedly his clean-cut and invariable definition of salvation and who seek it alone according to the method which he has prescribed? Not so. He answers simply: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 50).

This clear passage assuredly does not indicate that Jesus would first ferret out a man's belief before he would discern his spiritual relations to him. What was Jesus' constant charge to his disciples? Did he insist that they must successfully construe some metaphysical and mystical doctrine in full accordance with his own apprehension thereof? By no possible twisting of words or unconscionable perversion of natural meaning can the simple and clear speeches of Jesus be so manipulated as to lend coloring to such an interpretation. He declares plainly, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

There is another saying of the Great Teacher which so clearly and indisputably proves the appreciation he entertained of his true followers, and that

such followers are not at all dependent upon any set belief concerning him, that I cannot refrain from quoting it. He says: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but *he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. vii. 21).

And on still another occasion, as if he would with one word and forever drive from the minds of his hearers any such notion that beliefs or doctrines or interpretations or critical exegeses held any permanent or vital relation to the purpose of his mission, he cries out so clearly that none who is sincere can misconstrue him: "My doctrine [*i. e.*, teaching or guidance] is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will *do his will* he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John vii. 17).

It requires no scholastic learning to understand that in that passage Jesus meant to say, "You do not require any knowledge of dogmatic or exegetical interpretations of my sayings; you require no teachers in the Law to assure you that you are saved or not saved; but merely do God's will, be righteous, pure in heart, true to humanity, honest with your neighbor, and the doctrine will reveal its own authority to you." The deed is greater than the dogma. The deed saves without the dogma, for "by their fruits ye shall know them." He would emphasize the teaching that dogma cannot save, with or without the deed. Good works, life, character—these, according to Jesus, are the saving factors despite all beliefs or disbeliefs. "Act, act," he cries continually.

" Act in the living present,
Heart within and God o'erhead."

Such is emphatically the attitude Jesus assumes in all his practical teachings. But it is safe to say that every dogmatician who has asserted himself on this thesis has with proud assurance referred to one of the sayings of Jesus which, he has determined, is so conclusive and unequivocal in its purport that none can ignore it, but must ever concede that it is incontestably a strong buttress on which the dogma of Faith most safely rests. This passage is as follows: " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish but have everlasting life." . . . " He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." You will find these passages in the third chapter of the Gospel according to John. Now, these are the recorded sayings of Jesus, and if we do not impeach their authenticity we must admit that here is seeming authority, and apparently final, in support of the dogma of Faith. But the force of these texts as a confirmation of the old interpretation is wholly neutralized when they are read in connection with the context with which they are associated.

To call attention to these passages, singly and alone, without informing the seeker after truth that there are qualifying passages in the very authority appealed to, is to imitate the act of the pettifogging attorney who reads so much of an apppropriate

citation as suits his purpose but omits the adjoining context, that controverts the very point in issue which he is defending. When his performance is discovered it naturally prejudices the court against the attorney. In like manner have many been prejudiced against the orthodox interpretation of the Bible because this unfortunate method has too often been resorted to.

In the language which immediately follows the above passages Jesus himself explains his own meaning of the words he used. After having said that some were to be condemned, he declares that "this is the condemnation." Now, what?—a long confinement in the sulphurous bounds of hell? an everlasting banishment from the light and the presence of God? Does he say that such is the condemnation? No; he says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Does he say that they loved the darkness rather than the light, because they refused to parrot the declarations of ecclesiastic authority which seeks the absolute control of human judgment?—because they refused to accept the creed without question or explanation?—because they were unwilling to smite divine Reason from the throne of authority and instate thereon instead blind faith and puerile credulity? Does he declare that they are condemned because they reject the age-established standards and the ukase of ecclesiastical usurpation, whatever their lives may be, whatever their character?

This is the crucial question; and he answers it with such simplicity and clearness that he who runs may read. It is not faith or dogma, institute or creed, crown or sceptre, Torah or Scripture, nor any nor all of these, that can save an individual from condemnation or death, but his *deeds*,—these alone and nothing but these can save or condemn him. That is the indisputable teaching of Jesus in this very passage, which for so many ages has been set aloft on the pillars of Faith or been pressed down as a threatening crown of agony upon the brow of the honest unbeliever, who preferred eternal death, if need be, to the overthrow of his reason and the stultification of his convictions.

The long-proclaimed "condemnation" of the Gospels lies not, then, in any eternal judgment, irrevocably pronounced on that final day of the Great Assize, but in the condition of one's own heart and actions; and this condemnation comes not to one because he has refused to construe and accept Jesus according to certain set and unchangeable rules, but because one denies him in one's life and outrages his example by one's evil practices. This teaching is so much in accord with the scientific attitude of the present age, and so well suits the dictum of its ethics, that it affords a genuine gratification to the student to be able to prove that the great ethical Teacher of Christendom has really not contradicted or confused the principle, but has in the most forcible manner, both by precept and by practice, stoutly emphasized it.

So important is this issue that before going to another section of the discussion I wish to call

attention to still other passages in the words of Jesus which will show that I have in no way exaggerated his construction of salvation, but have merely set it forth as he himself has.

Let us read verses 20 and 21 of this same chapter of John: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light . . . But he that doeth truth cometh to the light." This is the gist of those verses: "He that *doeth* good (or truth)"—mark this; it is not asserted that he that *believeth*, or he that is properly indoctrinated and hath accepted the creed and hath answered the catechism to the full satisfaction of the church to which he may belong; not so: but "he that doeth good cometh to the light"; by which Jesus means, evidently, cometh to salvation —shall be saved.

The simple creed of Jesus, the only hint of one he verily ever gave, may be put in these few and encouraging words: "*He that doeth good is saved.*" If I felt it necessary to formulate any creed I should certainly adopt that one; for there is not the semblance of an objection that can be raised against it. It is simple, it is noble and inspiriting, it is universal; but best of all it is the honest creed of the honestest man that ever trod the earth.

Having reviewed the teachings of Jesus in regard to this problem let us now turn to the technical attitude assumed by his disciples.

Peter, a strict Jew, a stoutly literalistic Christian, a narrow, conservative, faltering follower of Jesus, ever fearful of his salvation, little apprehending the spiritual sense of those sublime parables which fell from the lips of his Master, according to his own

acknowledgment required a special revelation from the skies to learn that salvation came not by faith or through dogma, but by righteousness alone. He could not believe that the great gift of his Master could be idly thrown away on the fleshly, sensual, self-aggrandized, and pompous Gentile world; but that it was exclusive and wrought in some mystical manner for the benefit of the oppressed and outcast Jews alone; just as to-day each narrow creed-follower construes his faith as advantageous alone to the beneficiaries of his self-chosen church. But even this narrow-headed, ignorant, and unimaginative bigot, at last beholding a glimpse of the light, cries out, with evident pain: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts x. 35).

In this declaration Peter is certainly giving his definition of a Christian. He had formerly thought that none outside the house of David could be accepted by God, however great his faith or exalted his life. He believed in exact accordance with modern orthodoxy, only he confined the subjects of salvation to the Jewish portion of the race, while the Christian orthodox restricts salvation to such fortunate ones as accord in sentiment and belief with his own conception.

Paul was far more intelligent and profound than Peter. He was the father of modern orthodox theology. We should expect to find very positive dogmatism and narrow interpretation in this primitive teacher. Yet we shall discover, if we are honest

with him, that Paul's definition is as broad and liberal as that of Jesus. He says, in Rom. viii. 1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who . . ." Now if I should fill out this sentence according to the modern belief it would read: "who believe in the divinity of Jesus, in the atoning power of his blood, and accept these doctrines exactly as the orthodox creed defines them." But Paul finishes it as follows: "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." By this he means, those whose deeds are done in the light and under the guidance of the spirit of truth and righteousness, whose lives are pure and upright,—they are in Christ Jesus and have no condemnation.

Further on he emphasizes this position (Rom. viii. 14). "They are the sons of God" (here orthodoxy teaches us to say "as many as believe in the doctrines of the Church and look upon good works as but filthy rags, and who have no hope of salvation outside of the prescribed and mechanical process evolved through the ages by the great 'scribes and Pharisees' who so long sat in the places of authority"). But Paul fills this sentence out differently. He merely says "As many as are led by the Spirit of God—these are the sons of God."

And I find, further, that Paul has made his position on this question one not of uncertainty but of great clearness and force. If you will study Gal. v. 18 to 26 you will discover a definition of what constitutes a Christian, which is doubly positive and forceful because it is a definition by contrast.

Paul first tells us who are not Christians. Does he say that they are not Christians who cannot or will not make all the affirmations about Christ and the Bible which he demands that they shall? Does he declare that it is by the belief of people that we are to distinguish and classify them as Christians? If he intended to do so he has utterly failed in his effort. In describing those who are not Christians he uses the same method as in describing those who are such. He classifies them according to their deeds only, without the slightest reference to their beliefs or disbeliefs.

They are not Christians who indulge in deeds of uncleanness, lasciviousness, adultery, hatred, wrath, strife, murder, drunkenness, etc. On the contrary, they are Christians who indulge in deeds of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness," etc. These deeds, then, according to Paul, are the tests of religious classification. For he denominates those who follow the nobler acts as "sons of God," as the term "Christian" was not at that time in vogue. Here is not one word as to belief or its rejection, as to creed or dogma; it pronounces but one criterion for the Christian, by which standard he is to be adjudged—that standard is the character, the life. It is well to observe a peculiar comment by Paul at this point which is too often disregarded. He says of those whose lives are correct and righteous, "Against such there is no law." Now, the persistent and loud-proclaimed dictum of the established creed is that no one can be accepted as a Christian who will refuse to believe, no matter how pure, how upright, how noble, his life may be. His

righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of the all-pure God. But Paul says you cannot enact any law that will cause any restraint, any limitation, any qualification, against those whose lives manifest the inner spirit of Truth. Against such, he intimates, the excommunications of pulpits, the anathemas of councils, and the bold pronunciamentos of theological autocracies can avail nothing, for their "deeds are manifest that they are wrought in God." They need no proof of the acceptability of their souls—their deeds are proof sufficient.

Our study becomes even more interesting and convincing when we turn from the position of the Scripture writers on this subject, and examine those of the early Christian preachers and martyrs. If we desire to learn what the real teachings of Jesus and his disciples were we must needs ascend as far toward the original sources as the enlightened scholarship of the age will permit. Many of the sublimest and most ennobling of the teachings of the early Church have been relegated to the ignorance and oblivion of the past by a most stubborn and persistent array of theologians who seem to be determined that nothing shall be taught or believed concerning Jesus save such doctrines as they choose to promulgate.

It must not, however, be forgotten that the so-called new thought of this age is little more than a resuscitation of the pure spiritual teachings of the primitive fathers. We are by no means denying the Scriptures or the Christ, but we are simply striving to show that those schools and leaders that are seeking to impose autocratic dogmas upon the

world as genuine teachings of the Master and his original followers are the real antichrists who have turned the race away from the spiritual advantages of his divine injunctions. That we may the more clearly discern those simple and pure instructions it behooves us to turn to the age in which their authors lived, and read from the ungarbled sources while yet untouched by the distorting pen of the modern commentator.

I will first call attention to a famous passage in the writings of St. Augustine, one of the greatest of the early fathers. He lived in the fourth century. This is quite a period removed from the supposed era of the Christ, and yet even at so late a time we shall learn that none of the modern notions concerning the exclusiveness of Christianity and insistence on the narrow doctrine of faith in order to salvation, had entered into the prevalent teachings.

St. Augustine said, then, in the fourth century: "That in our time is the Christian religion, which to know and to follow is the most sure and certain health, called according to that name, but not according to the thing in itself of which it is the name; for the thing itself, which is *now called the Christian religion, really was known to the ancients, nor was wanting at any time from the beginning of the human race*, until the time when Christ came in the flesh, from whence the true religion, which previously existed, began to be called Christian" (*Opera Aug.*, vol. ix., p. 12).

To the uninformed and passive follower of the creed such assertions as the above, having the sanction of one of the founders of the Church, must

cause a severe mental shock. But the array of early writings in the same tenor is really so extensive as to become commonplace. Another learned father of the Church was Clemens Alexandrinus, who says: "Those who lived according to the reason (*Logos*) were really Christians, though accounted atheists—as Socrates and Heraclitus, and such as resembled them." Whatever may have been the mystical and artificial interpretation which these writers placed on the facts, it cannot be denied that they held with firm insistence that the religion of Jesus was not original with him or his disciples, but was evolved from a former series of religions which have unfolded from the beginning of all time. "*There exists not a people, whether Greek or barbarian, or any other race of men, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under the tents, or wander about in crowded wagons, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of a Crucified Savior to the Father and Creator of all things.*"[1] If, indeed, this be so, then what shall we say of the claim of modern Christianity which insists that no one is a subject of eternal salvation who refuses to accept the Palestinian Jesus, as the one only name under heaven whereby we can be saved?

If the heathen, the once supposed atheists, as Clemens of Alexandria implies, conceived of a spiritual crucified Savior to whom they offered up their faith and prayers, and these prayers, as the fathers taught, were as effectual for them as is the

[1] Justin Martyr, *Dialog. cum Trypho.*

prayer of the modern Christian for him, then surely the logical conclusion of their teaching is that whatsoever person perceives, through his own intuition, an ideal, which serves him as a spiritual Savior and uplifts his life from mental and moral deterioration, to him such a spiritual perception is the full and sufficient "name" whereby he may secure his salvation. This conclusion, which is so manifest to every clear thinking mind, had it not been dethroned from its once high authority and for so many ages been buried amid the bogs of slippery theologies and a wilderness of bewildering formulas and catechisms, would have saved the world countless battlefields where human blood was recklessly shed to maintain a syllogistic fantasy.

It was manifestly not conceived in the early days of the Christian religion that its followers had received from their Master a wholly new and before unheard-of revelation whose teachings could not be paralleled in any of the pre-existing religions. Its only claim seems to have been that since Jesus, who was called the Christ, had proclaimed it, and had in his own life demonstrated the possible realization of its ideals, it had been *renamed the Christian religion*, and stood as the final embodiment and proclamation of those universal truths known to all mankind from time immemorial.[1]

I trust that the above presentation clearly proves

[1] Says Justin Martyr (103–166 A.D.): "If we say that the Saviour of the world was born of a virgin, such an assertion can in no ways shock those who attribute an equally miraculous origin to Perseus. If the death of *our* god is an offence to you, why do you make mention of the death of most of the sons of Jupiter? If the miracles of

that it is not a matter of belief or disbelief, of accepting or rejecting a certain set of rules or a formula of faith, that makes one a Buddhist, a Jew, or a Christian. The primitive doctrine and purpose of all the religions have been identical. Their object was to make men good, pure, and godlike. This is the only justifiable motive that, to-day, impels any one to attach himself to any sect or religious denomination. One's mind may have been distorted by the prevalent doctrine that it is incumbent on one to accept a correct faith, on pain of subjecting his soul to the possibility of eternal misery; nevertheless, beneath this surface conviction one well knows that the cause of one's mental agitation is the consciousness that one's moral character, if measured by the ideal which his soul conceives, will be found wanting and he will fall into condemnation.

What motive could persuade me to become a Buddhist? Only the certainty that Buddha had so clearly revealed the way that I should be led through his teachings to Nirvana, and there enjoy that eternal bliss which is unattainable save through the gateway of his Path. One can sincerely be or become a Jew only when persuaded that Moses and the rabbis have so taught that by honestly following the line of duty which they have indicated one will ennoble and purify one's life. One honestly becomes a Christian who honors Christ's own de-

Christ seem to you too amazing, speak you no more of the marvellous cures *wrought* by Æsculapius!" (*Apologia*, i., 66, 67). [The italics are mine, and by them I wish to call the reader's attention to the fact that Justin Martyr placed Jesus, in his understanding, on an equal footing with the ancient heathen gods, so far as any claims to his authority were emphasized by miraculous circumstances.]

claration: "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life." As if Jesus had said, "By following the way I have gone you will come through the road unto the heights which I have attained."

The absurdity of the dogma of faith becomes very apparent if we put Jesus in juxtaposition with it. Think of Jesus debating about the essentials of a creed! Think of him who cried out: "Woe unto ye . . . hypocrites, for ye compass land and sea to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves";—think of this honest and simple teacher allowing himself to be inveigled into a hair-splitting discussion on the merits of the doctrine of foreordination, or driving into outer darkness one, pure in life, who rejected all the creeds and ignored all the churches because he felt that he could not do otherwise and not be a hypocrite!

The religious world of to-day has verily departed so far from the revolutionary instructions of the Founder of the Church that his simple declarations cannot be read with emphasis in any of the popular pulpits of the land without causing a palpable wincing throughout the congregation. How impossible it is to think of that bold and fervent revolutionist, his soul burning with intensest enthusiasm, armed with the conviction of his sublime mission, his only thought to point out to all the race the true path of life, that all may become as pure and true and exalted as his own ideal — how impossible to think of him splitting hairs over the question whether Socrates, who never knew him but whose life was in some respects like his own, could possibly enter

the kingdom of heaven, while the last murderer, convicted of sin in his cell the day before the "damnation of his taking off," could by "just believing" become the certain recipient of eternal bliss! And yet we know, though Jesus was a veritable heretic and revolutionist, overturning the tables of all the established usages and beliefs of the ecclesiastical organization into which he was born, he was nevertheless positive in his mental attitude toward all ethical problems which confonted him. Doctrines of faith he almost flippantly discarded or ignored. But doctrines of ethics he aggressively and irresistibly promulgated. He taught, indeed, essentials; but not essentials of a confounding creed. He taught the essentials of a noble life, of pure thoughts, of a spiritual aspiration that lifts the soul above moral miasmata as a bird's wings transport it to the skies.

What consternation the return of Jesus would create among the formal and pretentious Christians of the age! The unbelieving world, I am convinced, would not be one half so exercised and anxious over such an event as the believing Church. Not they who have been striving to attain the heights of a noble life, with or without creed, would be horrified, but the creed-created, age-deteriorated, and formalistic churches—these would be thrown into a pitiful state of bewilderment. Let us imagine the real Palestinian Jesus, in whom all modern churches profess to believe, actually appearing upon some promontory and proclaiming, "I am He that was, and is, and is to come." What do you think it would be the most ardent desire of Christians to

prove to this Jesus, should he thus suddenly walk among them in their homes and shops ?

Think you the Baptists, for instance, would hastily search for the records of their innumerable immersions and thus try to satisfy Jesus that " they had fulfilled all righteousness " ? Would the Presbyterians, think you, hasten to the offices of their pastors and plead for the long-forgotten Westminster Confession, and after they had brushed off two centuries of dust from its covers exultingly flourish it before Jesus as a magnificent proof of the accuracy and sufficiency of their doctrinal faith ? Or think you that the Episcopalians would come with vast tomes and prolix arguments to establish to his complete satisfaction that their ministry had faithfully maintained the line of the Apostolic succession unbroken, even from the hands of Paul ?

And if all this were done with apparent sincerity by these confused Christians, what do you think his reply would be ?

Can you not hear him once more thundering as of old : " Woe unto ye, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Woe unto ye, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, ye serpents, ye generation of vipers." In the language of to-day he would cry (if we are to believe that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever) : "Taught I you so to find and manifest me ? Thus led I you into the Way of Life ?—thus, that you should be babblers and brawlers, quarrelsome and contentious, schismatics and credentialists ?

" Taught I you to find me in books and brains, in arguments and disputations; in colleges and seminaries and in the baseless fabric of silly dialectics ? What, say you that I taught you to ' search the Scriptures ' of your disputatious Anselms and Calvins, your Athanasiuses and Arminiuses, your Ariuses and Nestoriuses,— sectarians and scholasticians, who in all the ages wore my livery but blighted the power of my spirit; loud-lunged fighters for a faith of whose simple precepts their contortious systems were base travesties and perversions ? Nay, nay, not so taught I.

" I taught you, wherever there was want there would I be; wherever there are goodness and purity and chastity and virtue and love and mercy, there am I. Wherever is the melody of peace, there is my voice; wherever are the soft strains of sympathy, there is my whisper. I told you to find me in the prison-cell, by the side of the sick and feeble, in the homes of the husbandless and friendless, where orphans cry for the vision of a mother's face they shall not on earth again behold, and where widows wear their crown of weeds. I told you to listen for my voice in the groan of despair, the shriek of fear, the sigh of grief, and in the moan of the outcast.

" But behold how you have perverted my mission! Behold how my words have died from all the ages, and nothing can be heard but the grating sounds of your pandemonious conclaves. Have you forgotten the parable of the Unfaithful Steward; of the Ten Talents; and of the visitation to prison-cells and to the couch of the sick and the dying ? All my teachings have been in vain and ye unto

whom I have entrusted all have become mine enemies!"

Such, indeed, the sentiments which would burst from the burning lips of the indignant Master. For his was a faithful soul and earnest. Who ever so decried the mockery of true religion and the mal-appropriation of lofty thought for social favor or personal advantage? The teachings of Jesus were, in this regard, in full accord with those of all the Avatars and spiritual prophets of the world. Neither Zoroaster nor Sakya Muni, Confucius nor Lao-Tsze, Moses nor Jesus, intended to prescribe a narrow theological pathway, through which alone the gateway to heaven should be sought. Theirs was an ethical prescription, signalizing the rule of duty and the authority of justice. According to these teachers, not excepting Jesus, it is not the creed of dogma, but the creed of ethics, which avails. The priests, the rabbis, the ecclesiastical orders, encumbered and encrusted the clear and simple teachings of those great leaders, distorting their principles, perverting their ideals.

To reach the Avatar we must demolish the ecclesiastic. To resurrect and enthrone Spiritual Truth, we must abolish the reign of Error and wrench from the creed the sceptre of its authority.

But it is said truth cannot abide in the hearts of those who are sincerely struggling after righteousness and exalted ideals, unless they restrain their footsteps within the pathway which has been for ages indicated by the established Church. But, may I humbly ask, are not love and truth the same the world over, whether they thrive in the bosom of

a Brahmin or a Baptist, a Parsee or a Presbyterian, a Methodist or a Mohammedan ?

Nay, these purblind followers of the blind might as justly insist that the energy of the sunbeam is not inwoven in the flower, the jewel, the tree, the foliage; gleams not in the sparkling brook nor shimmers in the grass, because these differentiations cannot be identified with the white, glowing ray that primarily emanated from the bosom of the sun. Were that great orb endowed with intelligence and voice, would he not exclaim: "I am wherever light is—in the lustre of the eye; in the splendor of the atmosphere; in the moon's pallid beams, and in the leafy shimmer. In the globule's iridescence do I sparkle, ride on Titanian motes that float invisible within the air, as well as flood with cosmic effulgence the surface of all worlds. I am wherever life is. I live in the juices of herbs and fruits, in floating sponge and creeping tendril, yea, as well in the soulless protozoan as in god-like man. I diffuse the breath of life; quiver in germ and gemmule; throb in pulsing vein, in cell and nerve, in toiling brain; everywhere the self-same sun, I still am manifest in myriad differing ways of form and life!"

And this is but symbolic of the manifold presence of the spiritual Christ in the aspiring hearts of men. "The sheep know the voice of the shepherd; from the hireling they flee."

Assuredly the common-sense of the age insists that it requires no creed or doctor of divinity, no seminary of learning or school of dialectics, to teach a poor, despairing soul what is the voice of the All-Pure crying within. When the cry of the down-

trodden heart ascends toward some Sublime Ideal it is the voice of the world-Christ: "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Be this cry in the bosom of the Bushman, in the soul of the Brahmin, in the spirit of a Buddhist, or in the breast of a Christian, it is all one cry — it is the self-same divine aspiration.

Wherever that cry ascends Truth descends.

He is, indeed, the veritable Christian who, bearing in the marks of his suffering and in the crown of his triumph the only essential of any faith—a lofty character—hears the responding voice of comfort: "Peace I leave with you. My Peace I give unto you."

"It must be that the light divine
That on your soul is pleased to shine
Is other than what falls on mine.

For you can fix and formalize
The Power to which you raise your eyes,
And trace Him in His palace-skies.

You can His thoughts and ends display
In fair historical array,
From Adam to the Judgment Day.

I cannot think Him here or there—
I think Him always, everywhere,
Unfading light, unstifled air."

CHAPTER IV

NATURAL PHENOMENA IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, OR THE TRI-UNITY OF MAN REFLECTED IN THE TRINITY OF GOD

IT is surprising how easily the Christian dogmatician can formulate a theory, based upon apparent historical authority, which when examined proves to be but a bubble quickly exploded by the first breath of opposition.

Joseph Cook at one time reached the very pinnacle of polemical prominence as a scholarly defender of orthodox Christianity. In his defence of the dogma of the Trinity he propounds seven propositions in which he undertakes to demolish James Freeman Clarke's statement that "down to the time of the Synod of Nice—Anno Domini 325—no doctrine of the Trinity existed in the Church."[1] To prove that the doctrine of the Trinity existed previous to that date, Cook quotes a statement made by the Emperor Adrian to the effect that "Alexandria is divided between the worship of Serapis and Christ." He further quotes the famous passage in Pliny's letter to Trajan: "They [Christians] are accustomed

[1] *Truths and Errors of Orthodoxy*, p. 508.

to meet on certain days and sing hymns to Christ as god." He quotes one or two more rumored statements of the martyrs who when given to the flames proclaimed their faith in the Holy Trinity in the midst of their torture.[1]

But these seemingly weighty authorities vanish into nothingness when put under the microscope of critical examination. Pliny's innuendo as to Christ is worthless. In Pliny's day many a human being was deified by popular acclaim. Cassius, speaking derisively of Cæsar, exclaims:

> And this man is now become a god!

Even the Bible itself uses the term "god" in this sense. "Thou shalt not revile the gods" (marginal reading, "or judges").[2] "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods" ("judges").[3] Pliny could easily have conceived that the Christians regarded Christ as a god in the same sense as he would regard one of the heroes of his day who had been deified.

In after years the Roman Catholic Church adopted the same custom by canonizing its most exalted devotees and praying to them as "saints." If we translate the pagan term "god" by the Catholic word "saint" we shall grasp the heathen notion of Deity and see the utter futility of Cook's effort to drag in Pliny as authority in support of his theory

[1] Cook, *Orthodoxy*, p. 85.

[2] Exodus xxii. 28.

[3] Ps. lxxxii. 1. Also, John x. 34, 35: "Is it not written in your law, I said Ye are gods? If then he called them 'gods' unto whom the word of God came," etc.

that the earliest Christians held the same idea of the Trinity that we have held since the Nicene Council.

We have a very good Biblical illustration of how the ancient heathens regarded the term "god" in the curious incident recorded in the Acts concerning Paul and Barnabas.[1] When, at Lystra, as the story runs, they cured a cripple, the people cried out, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." The ancients clearly held no such far-away and awful notion of Deity as we do, and Pliny's reference to Christ as "god" was manifestly of this character.

Our audacious author then quotes a few passages from Polycarp and Clement, which in a vague and colorless fashion seem to intimate the Divinity of Jesus but do not bear directly upon the Trinity of the Godhead. Nevertheless, as if he had advanced positive and incontrovertible proof instead of mere polemical assertions, he declares that the literature of the ante-Nicene Church (before A.D. 325) "everywhere proclaims God as three in one, omnipresent in natural law"; and "that that doctrine is the teaching of the first three centuries."[2]

Now, what says history? To begin with, the ante-Nicene age was the anti-theological age of the Church. The philosophical spirit, still overlapping Christianity from the preceding reign of Plato and Aristotle, prevailed in Christian thought. Polycarp, Irenæus, Clement, and Justin Martyr were not polemics; they did not fight for a dogma; they rather chose to breathe in their utterances the effusions of

[1] Acts xiv. 8 to 11.

[2] Cook, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 86, 87.

love and truthfulness, in imitation of their yet undisguised Master.

Says Pressensé, in his *Christian Life in the Early Church*[1]: "With reference to Christian doctrine, properly so called, the catacombs give us the broadest possible view of it; we find ourselves still in the age of freedom, which precedes the great councils and their theological decretals. The faith which lives in representations in the catacombs is peculiarly characterized by the absence of theology, properly so called, with its subtle distinctions and formal systems; so much so, that there is *no believer* in our day who may not find there the simple and popular expression of his own faith."

Such is the statement of an orthodox but able and impartial historian concerning the theological status of the ante-Nicene Church. It was, indeed, a Church with a religion, but without a fixed, bewildering, and incomprehensible theology. It had a faith but no system; a living hope—but no dictum of salvation. The doctrine of the Trinity as understood by all Christendom since the days of Athanasius could no more find hospitable reception in that anti-theological age than could a solid globe of matter float in the atmosphere of this planet without being attracted to its surface.

Only by intentional perversion of the palpable meaning of the writings of the ante-Nicene fathers can their assertions be twisted into a corroboration of what is now known as the doctrine of the Trinity. To learn how variously and loosely the early Christians construed the after-developed and

[1] P. 508.

fixed dogma of the Trinity, we need but know that the Montanists, who sustained about the same relation to the ancient Church as the Spiritualists do to the modern, and who were denounced as heretics, believed in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

"The Cataphrygians, or Montanists," says Epiphanius, "accept the whole of sacred scripture, both Old and New, and confess also the resurrection of the dead; they hold the same views as the Holy Catholic Church with regard to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[1] Even Pressensé says of the Montanist conception of the doctrine: "Montanism was no pioneer in theology; its doctrine of the Trinity has no more precision than had the orthodoxy of the age on this most dark and difficult point."[2] If the Montanists believed, as says Epiphanius, in the same doctrine of the Trinity as did the Holy Catholic Church, and if, as Pressensé says, the Montanists had no precise conception of the doctrine, then, manifestly on historic proof, the early (*i. e.*, the Catholic) Church held no precise but merely a loose and ill-defined understanding of this mystery.

Irenæus says: "If it is asked in what manner did the Son proceed from the Father, we reply that this procreation, this generation, this production, this manifestation, or call it what you will—this unutterable generation is known to none; not to angels, archangels, principalities, or powers. It is known to the Father alone, who brought forth the Son,

[1] Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity* ("Heresy and Doctrine"), p. 103.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

and to the Son who is born of Him. His generation cannot be told." [1]

While in this passage Irenæus seems to hint at the modern dogma concerning the second person of the Godhead, he shows how such a perversion of his understanding would be wholly unwarranted. He says: "The universal Father is indeed above all human affections and passions. He is a simple and not a *compound* being—ever equal and unchangeable." [2] "As God is in all spirit, all reason, all operating mind, all light, ever identical and equal with Himself, we may not think of Him as *in any sense divided*." [3]

But the modern orthodox polemic insists upon quoting these vague passages from the fathers to bolster up and sustain doctrinal points for which they were never intended. It is such colorless, inconclusive, and ill-defined intimations of the ancients on which Joseph Cook, and all modern dogmatists, rest the astounding declaration that the ante-Nicene "literature copiously asserts . . . that God as three in one is omnipresent in natural laws," and that this doctrine "is the teaching of the first three centuries."

But what is this doctrine for which the Church contends so ardently and which is incorporated in every modern Christian creed, either directly or indirectly? Is it a scriptural doctrine? Is it a doctrine exclusively Christian, or was it also taught in other religions which existed many centuries antecedent to Christianity?

While it may seem to some that it is a mere waste

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 379. [2] *Ibid.* ("Heresy"), p. 377. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 379.

of time to revamp the old discussion and point out anew the falseness of the ancient position of the creed, on the ground that but few are interested to-day in maintaining it, it must not be forgotten that we are told every honest Christian must mentally accept the dogma, on the peril of his salvation, no matter how inexplicable or absurd it may appear to him. No theologian pretends to explain the doctrine, much less to comprehend it. Indeed they all admit that they must accept it as a revealed doctrine, in spite of its irrationality and because of its very incomprehensibility. Nevertheless every Christian communicant is taught to believe that if he rejects the dogma he does so at the risk of eternal condemnation. Says Dr. Watson: "We now approach the great mystery of our faith — for the declaration of which we are so exclusively indebted to the scriptures that not only is it *incapable of proof, a priori*, but it derives no direct confirmatory evidence from the existence and wise and orderly arrangement of the works of God."[1] Again he says: "More objectionable than the attempts which have been made to prove this mystery by mere argument are pretensions to explain it."[2]

If this doctrine of the Trinity is so incapable either of proof or explanation, and is likewise repugnant to reason, why, then, was it incorporated in the system of Christian theology and made the chief corner-stone of the entire structure? We shall soon see that it slowly crept unrecognized into the Christian system from the pagan or heathen schools of

[1] Watson, *Institutes of Theology*, vol. i., p. 447.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 448.

philosophy, and was thence adapted to Catholic theology in the same manner as the usages and ceremonies of the ancient religions were rehabilitated and Christianized in the Catholic rites and customs.

"It has been the vice of the Christians of the third century to involve themselves in certain metaphysical questions, which, if considered in one light, are too sublime to become the subject of human wit; if in another, too trifling to gain the attention of reasoning men. . . . As soon as the copious language of Greece was vaguely applied to the definition of spiritual things, and the explanation of heavenly mysteries, the field of contention seemed to be removed from earth to air — where the foot found nothing stable to rest on." [1]

So long as the prelates had confined themselves to the mere language of scripture and only repeated the sayings of the Apostles without undertaking to explain them philosophically, there arose no confusion or dispute. But when the more learned pagans began to enter the churches (those who had been schooled in the neo-platonic systems of Alexandrian philosophy), they undertook to reduce the idealized and poetic fancies of the scriptures into fixed systems of thought and theology. They hovered long between the exalted idealism of Plato, which for a time found a sympathetic atmosphere in the teachings of Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus, and the sterner systems which at length found expression in the declarations of Athanasius and Augustine.

[1] Waddington, *History of the Church*, p. 92.

No one can read the history of the Nicene Council —of its fierce contentions, its brutish attack upon the Arians, its interminable jargon of speech and culminating confusion—without coming to the conclusion of Constantine, the presiding Emperor, that it was an absurd affair, and that there had not really been any new heresy introduced by the alleged heretics, but that all the contending parties really fought for the same opinion, although they could not understand each other.[1]

But theologians are unwilling to admit that the doctrine had a pagan origin, and insist with Dr. Priestley that, "however improbable in itself, it is necessary to explain certain peculiar texts of scripture; and that if it had not been for these particular texts we should have found no want for it, for there is neither any fact in nature, nor any purpose of morals, which are the subject and end of all religion, which require it."[2]

It behooves us, then, to inquire if Dr. Priestley's dictum is correct, and if scripture really does authorize this repugnant and irrational dogma. Of course all students of the Bible know that the word "Trinity" cannot be found between its covers. The word is not scriptural but purely theological; it is not only theological but polemical, being the product of contention.[3]

We shall find it necessary to understand the intel-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[2] Watson, *Institutes of Theology*, vol. ii., p. 452.

[3] Tertullian in the third century first introduces the word in his fiery discussion with Praxeas. *Vide* Waddington, *History of the Church*, p. 77; Pressensé, *Early Years* ("Heresy"), p. 437; and *Century Dictionary*, under the word "Trinity."

lectual atmosphere of the days of early Christianity in order to appreciate the introduction of this curious idea into the growing theology. There existed then two great parties representing diametrically opposite phases of thought. One party represented the spiritual phase: they were the esoterists, the illuminati. The other stood for the metaphysical thought, in the sense of the formal, systematic, and logical. The first were known as the Gnostics, consisting of a number of schools; the second was the Alexandrian or philosophical party, which sought to foist upon Christian theology the metaphysical interpretations which were consonant with the theories of the Greek Academicians.

Gnosticism "consisted essentially in ingrafting Christianity upon Magianism. It made the Savior an emanated intelligence derived from the eternal, self-existing mind; this intelligence, and not the Man-Jesus, was the Christ, who thus being an impassive phantom, afforded to Gnosticism no idea of an expiatory sacrifice, none of an atonement." I am quoting from Draper,[1] who further says: "The African or Platonic Christianity . . . modified the Gnostic idea to suit its own doctrines, asserting that the principle from which the universe originated was something emitted from the Supreme Mind and capable of being drawn into it again, as they supposed was the case with a ray and the sun."

The Alexandrian school, apparently by accident, gave rise to the modern, or post-Nicene, notion of the Trinity, by endeavoring to present a philosophical explanation of the theory of the Sonship of the

[1] Draper, *Intellectual Development of Europe*, vol. i., p. 273.

Godhead. In the time of the Emperor Hadrian Christian thought had become thoroughly permeated by the Platonizing influences of the Alexandrian philosophers. Following the habit of the Greek philosophers, they began to regard the doctrine of the procession of the Son from the Father as something mysterious. Justin Martyr's illustrative explanation became very popular. He said as one lamp was lighted from another without in aught diminishing its light, so the glory of the Son proceeded from that of the Father, without detracting from it. "God of God, Light of Light."

It is now beyond dispute that this mysterious interpretation of the doctrine was foisted upon Christianity by foreign Oriental influences, although as first introduced its character was spiritual and inoffensive.

At this juncture it will be an interesting digression to trace the history and evolution of this dogma, not only in the Christian Church, but as well in all the religions of the world. We shall discover that it is a universal doctrine; a conception, which either in poetic and ideal form, or in formal and systematic expression, found some representation in all the ethnic religions. We shall also discover that, alike in all religions, its first expression is poetic and exalted; inspired by the voices of nature and the experiences of mankind.

In this form its influence was ennobling; it uplifted and purified the faithful devotee. But as it finally takes shape in the crystallized creed of the Church, it is transformed into a hard, repulsive, and offensive dogma—a dogma utterly incomprehensible

by the keenest intelligences and nauseating to sensitive and refined natures. The growth of this doctrine pursues the same course in all the religions of the earth alike. The trend of human history is ever the same; the heart of man is identical under every arc of the circumambient skies.

The Vedic or Vedanta religion is probably the oldest on the earth. "It will be difficult to settle whether the Veda is the oldest of books, and whether some portions of the Old Testament may not be traced back to the same or even an earlier date than the oldest hymns of the Veda. But in the Aryan world, the Veda is certainly the oldest book, and its preservation amounts almost to a marvel."[1] Let us then inquire whether in so old a religion we shall find any intimations of this supposedly exclusive Christian dogma; a dogma which, according to established orthodox authorities, already cited, is founded absolutely on scriptural revelation.

Monier-Williams, one of the best authorities on the Indian religions, writes as follows: "When the universal and infinite Brahma—the only really existing entity, wholly without form, and unbound and unaffected by the three Gunas or by qualities of any kind—wished to create for his own entertainment the phenomena of the universe, he assumed the quality of activity and became a male person, as Brahma, the Creator. Next, in the progress of still further self-evolution, he willed to invest himself with the second quality of goodness, as Vishnu, the Preserver, and with the third quality of darkness, as

[1] Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i., p. 5.

Shiva, the Destroyer. This development of the doctrine of triple manifestation (*tri-murti*), which appears first in the Brahmanized version of the Indian epics, had *already been adumbrated* in the triple form of fire, and in the triad gods, Agni, Surya, and Indra; and in other ways." [1]

From this we will perceive that a trinitarian conception prevailed even at the very dawn of history; and that the notion grew out of the effort to interpret the phenomena of existence. In the Vedas Brahma is made to represent the universal matrix—the all-creative principle, out of which every visible thing has been evolved. The *process* of evolution—the harmonious co-operation of the cosmic functions, maintaining the perpetuity of the integral universe—is represented by Vishnu, the Preserver. The disintegrating and reconstructive forces of nature—repellance and cohesion—the permanence of life in the midst of endless disintegration and death—are represented by Shiva, the Serpent, the Destroyer.

This purely poetic interpretation of nature, founded on metaphysical aptitudes, gradually deteriorated into a more tangible and material conception, transforming the three forces everywhere manifest in nature into individualities and self-conscious persons.

This evolution of the apparent forces of nature into individualities is evidenced by a very ancient poet, Kalidasa, when he sings in *Kumara-sambhava* as follows:

" In those three persons the one God was shown—
Each first in place—each last—not one alone;

[1] *Indian Wisdom*, p. 324.

Of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, each may be,
First, second, third, among the blessed three." [1]

It is not a subject of wonder that when the first Christian missionaries discovered these evidences of extra-Bible revelations to these heathen people they were baffled and confounded.

In his *Asiatic Researches* Sir William Jones remarks [2] that the missionaries insisted that the Hindus were almost Christians, because their Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva were no other than the Christian Deity. The limitations of this chapter will not permit me to illustrate this fact any further, else it could easily be shown that the triad or trinitarian conception is alike found in the Parsee, the Chinese, the Egyptian, the Jewish, the Mexican, Aztec, and indeed in every religion of whose cult we have any records or traditions.

The fact that these startling correspondences can be traced between Christianity and the pre-existing ethnic religions has given rise to two antagonistic conclusions, neither of which I believe the history of thought corroborates.

On the one hand we have the aggrieved and disconcerted dogmatic divines, such as Francis Hernandes, in 1545 A.D., who wrote concerning his discoveries among the Mexicans and Peruvians, as follows:

"The Indians believed in the God who was in heaven; that this God was the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that the Father was named Yzona,

[1] Griffiths, *Kumara-sambhava*, vii., 44; also Doane, *Bible Myths*, p. 370.

[2] Vol. i., p. 272.

the Son Bacab, who was born of a Virgin, and that the Holy Ghost was called Echiah." [1]

The Rev. Father Acosta says, in his *History of the Indies*, volume ii., page 373:

"It is strange that the devil after his manner hath brought a Trinity into idolatry, for the three images of the Sun called *Aponti*, *Churunti*, and *Intaquaoqui*, signifieth Father and Lord Sun, the Son Sun, and the Brother Sun.

"Being in Chuquisaca, an honorable priest showed me an information, which I had long in my hands, where it was proved that there was a certain oratory, whereat the Indians did worship an idol called Tangatanga, which they said was 'One in Three, and Three in One.' And as this priest stood amazed thereat, I said that the devil by his infernal and obstinate pride (whereby he always pretends to make himself God) did steal all that he could from the truth, to employ it in his lying and deceits."

This is but the trick of the dogmatician who, discovering aught in nature which confounds the dictum of his creed and disrupts the well wrought links of his logic, at once laments that the devil is the omnipresent *X* in the universe, which makes all scientific accuracy an impossibility, when such accuracies are to be dovetailed with alleged revelation.

On the other hand, we have the equally unacceptable assertion by the sceptic, that all such discovered correspondences between Christianity and the ethnic religions are proof *prima-facie* of fraud and collusion, and are sufficient to dishonor all their claims to respectful consideration. Thus the Rev. Robert

[1] Kingsborough, *Mexican Antiquities*, vol. vi., p. 64.

Taylor (an unjustly maligned and persecuted rejecter of Christianity) says, when considering the correspondences between the Apostles' Creed and other creeds of the Pagans: "As, then, the so-called Apostles' Creed is admitted to have been written by no such persons as the Apostles, and, with respect to the high authority which has for so many ages been claimed for it, is a convicted imposture and forgery, the equity of rational evidence will allow weight enough to overthrow all the remains of its pretensions."[1] Such conclusions are apparently rash and unphilosophical.

A later and far worthier authority, Mr. C. F. Keary, of the British Museum, in his *Outlines of Primitive Belief*, has given us a middle ground on which to rest, and one where our conclusions will, I think, come nearer to historical accuracy. He says: "When resemblances, such as those we have noticed, are to be found in the religions of many different peoples, they spring out of the fundamental likeness of all religions, as being products of human thought. . . . The ancients always made things happen in the way of importation and personal influence: the worship of a god in their traditions is generally said to have been introduced by some particular hero. But such is not the usual history of religious ideas. Either they spring up naturally or they never flourish at all."[2]

[1] Taylor, *Diegesis*, p. 10.

[2] Keary, *Outlines*, pp. 220 *et seq.*; also *vide* Spencer's *First Principles*, pp. 13, 14. "To the presumption that a number of diverse beliefs of the same class have some common foundation in fact, must in this case be added a further presumption derived from the omnipresence of the beliefs. Religious ideas of one kind or other

But that the conception of the Trinity has emanated from the far misty antiquity of thought is beyond dispute. "It is now well known that traces of this doctrine are discovered not only in the three principals of the Chaldaic theology; in the *Triplasios Mithra* of the Persians; in the triad —Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—of India; but in the Numen Triplex of Japan; in the inscription 'To the Triune God' upon the famous medal found in the deserts of Siberia, to be seen at this day in the valuable cabinet of the Empress at St. Petersburg; in the Tanga-Tanga, or 'Three in One,' of the South Americans, and finally, without mentioning the vestiges of it in Greece, in the symbol of the Wing, the Globe, and the Serpent, conspicuous on most of the ancient temples in Upper Egypt."[1] This passage was written as early as 1794 and caused the first scientific unsettling of the dogmatic divines who assumed that the doctrine of the Trinity originated with Christianity and found its authority in the

are almost universal. . . . Their endless variety serves but to strengthen this conclusion: showing as it does a more or less independent genesis—showing how, in different places and times, like conditions have led to similar trains of thought, ending in analogous results. That these countless different, and yet allied, phenomena presented by all religions are accidental or factitious, is an untenable supposition. A candid examination of the evidence quite negatives the doctrine maintained by some, that creeds are priestly inventions."

[1] Thomas Maurice, *Indian Antiquities*, vol. i., pp. 125–127. Of this author, McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia of Bibliographical Literature* says (s. v.): "Noted particularly for his studies of the antiquities of India—was Thomas Maurice, Bishop of Lowth. The irreligious spirit of the French Revolution alarming him, induced him to remodel his first work after it was nearly completed, and to devote a considerable portion to the dissertation on Hindu mythology. The work remains to our day a trustworthy book of reference."

famous passage of 1 John v. 7, now long admitted to be an interpolation by all unprejudiced Bible scholars.[1]

Having thus traced this doctrine through its manifold variations in the religions of the earth, it will be interesting to still further pursue its evolution to its final form as expressed by the Nicene Council, A.D. 325. It will be curious to observe how materially transformed and signally debased a purely metaphysical idea, resting on natural phenomena, becomes when passing through the dry brains of theologians.

Some have discerned a mystical origin of the doctrine sprung from the ancient occult knowledge of nature. "That heaven in its whole complex resembles a man", (it is Swedenborg who is speaking) "is an arcanum not yet known to the world. Heaven is the greatest and the Divine Man. The ancients called man a microcosm, or a little universe, from a knowledge of correspondence which the most ancient people possessed."

From this alleged arcanum the notion of the triplex constituency of the starry heavens was developed. This triplex constituency consisted in the pre-existing essence of light; the starry spheres manifesting this light; and lastly the watchfulness of the orbs of splendor over the fates of men. Thus, Light was the pre-existing Father; the condensed globes of the stars—the manifestation of light in concrete form—represented the Son; and the ever-present rays of light emanating from the

[1] 1 John v. 7: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

heavens constituted the Holy Spirit. Traces of this conception are to be found all through ancient art. There have been found pictures of a man suspended in mid-heavens, his head representing the Father,—" the most High "; his heart representing the Son,—the luminous centre of creation; and the generative organs representing — by a six-pointed star—the conjunction of the higher forces with the lower, or " the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost " in the affairs of man.

However mystical and unintelligible this arcane interpretation of nature may seem to modern minds, it is certainly not so absurd or irrational as its crystallized expression in the Christian Creed. As I have shown above, the apprehension of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early Christian Church was vague—expressed in loose and ill-defined language —and not considered capable either of interpretation or formalized expression. But when the councils of the Church appropriated it, they removed it from its vague atmosphere and sought to confine it in specific and exact language, which, though meaningless, is nevertheless so positive as to allow of no other interpretation save that which orthodox authority has imposed.

Before quoting the dictum of Athanasius, after whose thought the dogma found its final expression, it will be of value and interest to state the circumstances which compelled the Church council to declare itself *ex cathedra* on the doctrine. The very fact that the great Council of Nicæa was forced to decide, after a long, heated, brutal debate, the exact and authenticated expression of the dogma, proves

that until this council convened in the year 325 there was no authorized or fixed interpretation which was commonly entertained. This simple fact alone is sufficient to override Joseph Cook's reckless declaration that the doctrine of the Trinity as we now understand it was the universal teaching of the Church in the first three Christian centuries.

But the storm-centre of the discussion was the problem to which the divinity of the second person of the Godhead gave rise. It was argued by Arius and his followers that the Son proceeded from the Father — as it was commonly understood in the theology of the day; but if the Son proceeded from the Father—after the similitude of human procreation—then of course he could not be co-eternal with the Father, and must have had an origin or creation. This was the crucial problem. If Arius were right, then the theory as to Christ which the orthodox party had invented must fall to the ground and the worship of Jesus be declared idolatrous.

But there rose up to contest the logic of the saturnine Libyan a keen, virile, aggressive, and casuistical antagonist, whose force of personal character and lack of intellectual scruple were so strong as to overpower the assembly and command the votes of the majority. For let no student of religion forget that everything which is vital to the essence of theological Christianity has been *voted* into authority, as any law is enacted by a legislature or parliament, wholly without the intervention of any special providence or revelation, notwithstanding the constant claim that all the doctrines of the Church are authorized by God through

the only revelation which has ever been given to mankind.

Nor let it be passed as a slight circumstance that, according to the best orthodox authorities, Arius was defending the real, accepted, and well understood interpretation of the early Church. "He was intending simply to defend the old doctrine. He doubtless believed that he was maintaining the ancient doctrine of the Church—so little difference was there, according to Neander, between the doctrine of Arius and that of the preceding ages."[1]

Thus the entire Christian world was involved in a discussion pertaining to a theme more abstruse and recondite than any that had confronted the Academicians or Peripatetics of the ancient Greeks. Minds ill prepared by the profound investigations of science or the discipline of philosophic speculation were called upon to decide as to metaphysical differentiations of thought from which the philosophers of antiquity and the careful students of our day would recoil with terror.

Tertullian boasted that "the Christian mechanic could readily answer such questions as had perplexed the wisest of the Grecian sages."[2] But notwithstanding this, that same Athanasius who conquered the Council of Nicæa, rode rough-shod, although a young man, over the venerable Eusebius of Nicodemia and the astute Arius, and compelled the assembly to endorse the creedal form of the

[1] Neander, *History of the Christian Religion*, vol. ii., pp. 361–365, as quoted in Lamson, *Church of the First Three Centuries*, pp. 254 *et seq.*

[2] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. ii., p. 311.

Trinity, was constrained, in his moments of honest meditation, to declare that "whenever he forced his understanding to meditate on the divinity of the Logos, his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought the less he comprehended; and the more he wrote the less capable was he of expressing himself." [1] Nevertheless, without understanding what he wrote, incapable of intelligibly expressing his thought upon this inexplicable theme, and certainly while wholly unconscious of the historic origin of this most mystical of all dogmas, this same Athanasius wrote that section of the creed which here follows — which defies the interpretation of the keenest minds that have exercised their reason over it. (To be accurate, Athanasius did not himself write the creed, but its formula was taken directly from his writings against Arius, and it was therefore entitled the Athanasian Creed.)

"Whoever will be saved before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

Now, one would suppose that this severe and threatful preamble would introduce a faith at least so intelligible, simple, and comprehensible that he who runs may read. But—behold the faith one must keep whole and undefiled, or perish everlastingly:

[1] Gibbon, vol. ii., p. 310. *Vide* Waddington, *Church History*, p. 97, who says: "His [Athanasius'] character is admirably described by Gibbon—and written with splendor and impartiality." Waddington is, of course, very orthodox.

"And the Catholic faith (*i. e.*, the true faith) is this: that we worship one God in Trinity; and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the powers nor dividing the substance. For there is one PERSON of the Father; another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. And yet they are not three Eternals but one Eternal. So the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods but one God. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods and three Lords. He therefore that *will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.*"

What wonder that Athanasius, who holds the distinguished honor of having this famous creed called after him, acknowledged that when he forced his mind to meditate on it he found that his toilsome efforts recoiled on themselves! M. Réville[1] says that "The dogma of the Trinity displayed its contradictions with true bravery."

A more audacious jumble of meaningless words, a more blaring resonance of sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, in the name of truth and sincerity, was never before heard in human history.

And mark the austerity of the pronouncement. One "must thus think of the Trinity"—as three in one and one in three—three persons yet not three persons—three gods yet not three but one God—at the peril of everlasting damnation! Since the days of the Nicene Council this is the doctrine which is proclaimed by all orthodox churches. On

[1] *Dogma of Jesus*, p. 95.

its acceptance, by whatever stultification of one's reason, the salvation of every individual is said to depend.

It would seem that modern divines would be too rational, too truthful, too intelligent, to continue to advocate such a mess of syllogistic absurdities. But the truth is, this doctrine, involving that of the Godship of Jesus of Nazareth,—the very corner-stone of the orthodox structure,—must necessarily be insisted upon unless they are willing to surrender the entire system. No effort is made to explain it, much less to comprehend it. But, as if it were a positive law of nature, it is regarded as a revelation of truth, and accepted the more because of its very inexplicableness and mystery.

Is it not time that the intelligence of the age should inquire into this curious doctrine and seek to discover some rational and historical basis for it? Why not try to discover its origin in human thought as we strive to discover the origin of thought in general? Is it not possible that there is, after all, nothing whatsoever mysterious or abstruse or mystical in this universal conception, but that it has its basis in the physical and mental experience of the human race? The very fact of its universality proves that it is not a special revelation to any one people,—if such a revelation were scientifically possible. Has it not a deeper purport, a more serious origin,—one more immediately related to the vicissitudes and experience of the race? Is it all myth,—all mere absurdity?

Although we reject the antiquated interpretation of the mysterious doctrine we are contemplating,

and cannot accept the system of theology which the Church has reared upon it, nevertheless, it may find a place in rational thought and the deeper interpretation of nature.

Man never conceives of aught which the necessities of his nature do not demand. Nor has aught ever been conceived by the human mind which did not in some manner satisfy an inner yearning. Can we not find in the very constitution of the human mind, in its laws of being, and in the analysis of its function of thought, the inception and primitive basis of this curious doctrine which has so long bewildered the theologian and baffled the philosopher?

Is there not a trinity in man—and has he not by the accident and delusion of experience projected his intuitive apprehension of himself into the realm of the objective? Has not this resulted in an erroneous conviction that what was but a necessary concept of his mind was, indeed, an entity existing extraneously to himself?

If we trace the gradual steps of self-consciousness we may discern the evolution of this mental condition. The natural man—the savage—first realized himself as form—body—externality. While he was exploring the physical possibilities of earth—while he hunted, fought, toiled, hewed the forest, split the rock, and conquered the elements—he had not yet acquired time or ability to discern aught in himself but materiality — mass — configuration — articulating joints and elastic muscles.

But as time slowly rolled by and the subtle forces of civilization gradually triumphed—when leisure and contemplation came to him—then awoke the

magic power of his soul—his intellect—and man began to think and reason. That deep, unfathomable reservoir of being which we call the soul, whose mysterious depths have never yet been sounded by the plummet of human knowledge, gradually sent forth its streams of discovery and cognition—till man was transformed from the grovelling savage to the divine philosopher.

Then were builded the glorious things of civilization—its cities and nations and continents—magic transformations of untiring genius. Then followed the scientific conquests of the battle-field—the splendors of art—the glory of literature. The mind—that impalpable something—wrought from rough-hewn marble the sculptured forms of angels; glowed in luminous ideals that breathed upon the living canvas; effloresced in the poetic imagery of thought; delved into the depths of nature's arcana; stole the secrets of the stars, and dissolved the mysterious union of the elements—till man rose from the dank and boggy lowlands of savagery to the golden heights of pure intelligence.

The age of the troglodyte had ascended to the age of Pericles. Caliban had become Plato; Sycorax, Hypatia. The man of muscle is now the man of brain. Invention, machinery, all the instrumentalities of industrial progress,—swift offspring of the prolific brain of man,—glorify his habitation of the earth. This is the Golden Age of man's highest external attainments, when the ideals of the soul shine forth in the tangible forms of beauty, utility, symmetry, and grandeur; when every thought that breathes spurs the heart to action, and every word

that burns thrills a responsive world with inspiring hope. This is the second stage of man's ascent, when

> "Science moves but slowly, slowly—creeping on from point to point."

But is this the last stage ?

There is another.

The time comes when there bursts upon human consciousness a light that never shone on land or sea, which does not project upon the screen of the outer world new visions of wonder and mystery, but casts its splendor within and reveals a shoreless ocean whose fathomless depths the mind in vain has ever sought to sound, whose weird entrancement ever holds the contemplative spirit in ecstatic rapture.

Then is indeed the

> "Meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth and every common sight,
> Apparelled in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream."

This is the third stage—the highest—the last on earth. This is that state of ascent where man cries out, in the language of the Christian Gnostic: "O Light of lights, Thou whom I have seen from the beginning, listen to the cry of my repenting. Save me, O Light, from my thoughts, which are evil! Now, O Light, in the simplicity of my heart, I have followed the false brightness which I mistook

for Thee. Deliver my soul from this dark matter lest I be swallowed up" (*Pistis Sophia*[1]).

This is the stage when the things of matter pass away and the eternities of spirit dawn upon the soul. Then from this lofty height man contemplates himself, not only as body—mass, solidity, opaqueness—but as soul — moving matter, energy, thought, brain activity; and anon, as the real Paraclete—the possessor of glorious light, light that is supernal, the light of love, wisdom — all knowledge and consciousness of the eternal.

> "Hence in a season of calm weather,
> Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither."

Not one of these three stages of human progress has yet been perfectly realized in man's evolution. Nevertheless, each stage has emphasized itself in man's development commensurately with human needs. But each higher stage has given intimations of its realm and revealed its possibilities to man while he still grovelled in the lower levels.

These intimations have ever troubled the spirit of the race and disturbed its scientific conclusions. It is not then to be marvelled at that they have found expression in vague and bewildering phases of human thought and even in the religious formulæ of earth.

To me the following statement seems to be the scientific analysis of the universal conception of the

[1] Pressensé, *Early Church* ("Heresy"), pp. 37, 38.

Trinity, which has so long puzzled scholars and theologians:

Matter—form—the matrix of manifest existence—is the ALL-FATHER—the primal source—the potent factor which man realizes is essential to all life. Without matter, the world were not; without body, the race had never been; without form there had been no differentiation—hence no self-consciousness. Thus arose the first intimation of "the universal presence."

This idea we may discern vaguely hinted at in the old Indian names of Deity. They had various names for Him, but when they desired to think of Him as ever immanent they called Him "Dyaus" (this means the ever bright sky [1]); this among the Greeks was transformed into Zeus, from which came the phrase Zeus-pater, afterwards Zeupater, ultimating among the Romans in the term Jupiter. Mr. Keary very adroitly shows how all these terms come from the same idea and nearly from the same root. From this primitive notion (that the sky was ever present and shed light on man's path) has come the name of every god whom in man's moments of forlornness he has called, in the emphatic sense, The Father.

The second stage of progress was the thought-stage—the stage of mind—the epoch of mental and physical activities—the age of war, civic growth, science, industry, and the arts. Here we discern the outgoing, the moving, the dynamic factor of growth. The silent matrix—the universal poten-

[1] Keary, *Outlines*, p. 41; also Max Müller, *Origin of Religion*, p. 4.

tiality—Matter—awakens, moves, begets, and manifests itself in the forces and forms of living nature.

Here is the Sonship.

The Father is nature—quiescent, potential, passive. The Son is nature—perfervid with energy—active, achieving.

In this manner we may discover a natural origin, in human thought,—however vague its primitive intimations,—of that mysterious problem of the creed—*the procession of the Son from the Father.* Here is the whole mystery of nature—the stumbling-block of science; namely, the generation of life—abiogenesis—the transformation of potential matter into living, conscious activity. Science to this day knows nothing of this problem, and both Huxley and Tyndall, and the entire modern school of physicists, have despaired of solving the problem of spontaneous generation.

No wonder Irenæus exclaimed: "If it is asked *in what manner* did the Son proceed from the Father, we reply that this procreation is known to none—not to angels, archangels, principalities, or powers"![1]

First, then, the visible universe of form—ceaseless presence—gave rise to the conception of the "All-

[1] "Who knows the secret? Who proclaimed it here,
Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
The gods themselves came later into being—
Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?
He from whom all this great creation came,
Whether His will created or was mute,
The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven,
He knows it—or perchance even He knows not."

(Extract from a hymn in the *Rig-Veda* translated by Max Müller. Vide *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i., p. 76.)

Father." Second, the active, generating, dynamic world gave rise to the notion of " the Son "—procession—procreation. Thus, thirdly, the dreamy idealism that clothed all nature with the golden mist of poetic fancy—that discerned a light beyond the stars—a mantle of glory over every flower and stream and rocky height (which the dull physical eye of man could never discover)—gave rise to the conception of an all-pervasive and overshadowing Light—in all and enveloping all—that mystic something in whose alembic the base metal of common consciousness is transformed into pure reality—the reality of Being, where abides the all-enswathing presence—the Comforter—the Holy Ghost.

If we but realize how, in historic growth, great results have followed infinitesimal beginnings, we shall not marvel that so monstrous, so bewildering, unthinkable, and absurd a metaphysic and theology have evolved from such simple origins, as I have above indicated, of man's conception of his triune nature.

He is indeed body, mind, and soul, form, intellect, spirit; or, in Paul's words, " body, soul, and spirit." He cannot escape his conscious triunity in whatever mood of thought he may enter. Every idea which he conceives has come to him through these three stages of progress. Or, if they have passed through only two, his consciousness is yet in a state of arrested evolution.

If man rests only on the plane of mind and body, he has not yet realized himself. Not until he perceives himself imaged in the mirror of his own soul —in the mirage of spirit—will he ever know himself

as he is. " Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."

The Trinity as a dogma of theology is repulsive, unintelligible, and ludicrous—if not atrocious. But as a metaphysical concept, resting on actual human experience, it is a natural product of the evolution of man—the orderly and scientific expression of his triune nature. Thus comprehended it may constitute a fundamental basis for a scientific knowledge of real man, and incite to a profounder investigation of the recondite than the race has ever yet known. The scientific principles of the Trinity may furnish the knowledge to man for his self-realization on the plane of divine consciousness.

CHAPTER V

THE MYTH OF HELL, OR THE HUMAN HEART EXPLORED

OF all the conceits which have held the mind of man in awe, the most appalling is the picture of an eternal Hell. That man—but an instantaneous flash of light, coming and going like a lightning-gleam on a darkened sky — but a second's thought and then no more—should in that instant of time, in that momentary flash of existence, form and fashion his eternal fate for weal or woe, is a belief so monstrous that we can scarcely convince ourselves it was once almost universal.

What sinister power so perverted his logic as to force man to think so diametrically contrary to the truth ? Why should he be his own contemner ? Why should he who loves himself more than aught else in the universe condemn himself above all things else ?

His observation of nature had taught him that all her punitive energies are bent, not on deterioration but on melioration; not on dissipation but on integration. " There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender

branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant" (Job xiv. 7–9).

The dank days of chill November must needs forestall the wholesome snows of winter through whose frosty air the invigorating sun emits his healthful beams; the deathlike barrenness of winter's solstice forms but the white chrysalis from which anon the springtide leaps with resurrection life; every seed that falls and fades in the ground bursts forth once more with life renewed; every leaf that shrivels in the dust out of its own decay gives forth new energies that crystallize in fructifying forms of plant and tree and flower; the plague that blights, consumes, and withers, but gathers the death-breeding germs of the atmosphere and wrings them out as from a sponge; the hurricane that blasts with wind and rain and lightning, but re-establishes the equilibrium of the air, without which continued comfort were impossible.

Every affliction of nature has a tendency to good; every destructive force is bent on restitution.

Why, then, should he, whose destiny it is

> "To lie in cold obstruction and to rot,"

believe that there is for him alone a resurrection whose fate eternal is

> "worse than worst
> Of those that lawless and incertain thoughts
> Imagine howling?"

A mind that is tuned to the sensitive note of harmony must shudderingly exclaim with the poet, "It is too horrible!"

Is it not strange that man should have imagined for himself an end more execrable, more horrible, than what he has conceived for beast or bird, or any living thing? For them, at least, is rest and the last long sleep of peace. For them, no phantom horrors sit with chattering teeth to tell a tale of endless woe; for them no sulphurous caldrons "boil and bubble" with the dying forms that never die; for them no deathless worm of agony, no consuming fire that is never quenched. The beast, the fowls of the air, the crawling insects—for these, at least, the imagination of man has mercy.

But for himself—the crown and glory of all creation—he thinks but curse and final woe. For him—"in action, how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals"—for him there awaits, if he be not obedient to the "faith once delivered to the saints," a life a thousand-fold worse than death; where shall his

> "delighted spirit
> Bathe in fiery floods, or, reside
> In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice!"

The invention of the imagination seems to have been strained to an extreme tension by the poets and theologians who have been true to the traditions of the Church. The greatest poet of evangelical Christianity thus describes the abode of the damned:

" Beyond the flood a frozen continent
Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
Of whirlwind and dire hail. . . .
Thither by harpy-footed furies hailed,
At certain revolutions, all the damned
Are brought; and feel by turns the bitter change
Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce:—
From beds of raging fire, to starve in ice
Their soft, ethereal warmth, and there to pine,
Immovable, infixed, and frozen round,
Periods of time; thence hurried back to fire,
They ferry over this Lethean sound,
Both to and fro—their sorrow to augment;
And wish and struggle as they pass, to reach
The tempting stream. . . .
But Fate withstands, and to oppose the attempt
Medusa with Gorgonian terror guards
The ford, and of itself the water flies
All taste of living wight, as once it fled
The lip of Tantalus! [1] "

This may, however, be said to be but the imagery of the poet, who enjoys the license of his profession. But the theologian who revelled in the literal tradition of religious myth was loath to allow the poet to pass him in vivid depiction of the eternal torment. In proof here is an extract from a not very antique sermon:

" See! on the middle of that red-hot floor stands a girl; she looks about sixteen years old. Her feet are bare. She has neither stockings nor shoes. Listen! she speaks. She says: ' I have been standing on this red-hot floor for years. Day and

[1] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. ii.

night my only standing-place has been this red-hot floor. Look at my burnt and bleeding feet. Let me go off this burning floor, only for one short moment.'

"The fourth dungeon is the boiling kettle—in the middle of it there is a boy. His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two long flames come out of the ears. Sometimes he opens his mouth and blazing fire rolls out. But listen! there is a sound like a kettle boiling. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head. The marrow is boiling in his bones. The fifth dungeon is the red-hot oven. The little child is in this red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out. See how it turns and twists itself about in the fire. It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor."[1]

However we may be repelled by the foregoing sentiments, the student will certainly find it both interesting and instructive to search for their historical origin. They could not have sprung spontaneously from the heart of man. They must have sprung from inimical and untoward experiences, which left inerasable impressions on the human mind.

The life and experience of every child is the life and experience of the entire race in miniature. The child loves that which pleases, and hates and fears that which tortures him. The little lap-dog is his playmate and his joy till, perchance, it snaps

[1] Extract from a sermon by a Catholic priest, Rev. J. Furniss, C.S.S.R., quoted in Bray's *God and Man*, p. 255.

at and bites him; then it becomes his terror—the monster from which he ever flees. The lightning that leaps from the heavens on a summer night and thrills his sensitive nerves with exquisite pleasure, if perchance it smites the tree at his side, ever after frightens and appalls him as an evil power.

Such was the experience of the first races of the earth,—the childhood races of mankind. They were indeed but children. They were at first amused by nature's elements, as by toys, until they turned upon them as monsters and struck terror into their breasts.

How could puny man prevail against the mighty elements of the air and the prowling beasts that populated the earth? Behind every tree lurked a leopard; in the shadow of every rock a crouching lion; above their heads vampires flapped their hideous wings, thirsting for the blood of victims; whilst in the grasses monstrous serpents lay concealed or from the foamy deep uprose, more frightful than those that encoiled Laocoön and his young sons. He was besieged on all sides by dreadful objects which inspired but fear and terror. At first, trustful and credulous as an infant, he saw good in all. He had not yet learned aught of nature's inimical powers. He found in every object a friend and in every feature a god.

There is nothing in the universe that at some time has not been venerated by man as an object of worship. Such his faith—his credulity. The serpent whose sting was death was once his companion and his joy. He adored the lion as he lay down in peace with the panther. The crocodile he

idealized into a deity, and the Egyptian serpent was the messenger of good. Each mountain peak and jutting sea-cliff, each graceful tree and piebald flower, the purling streams, the rushing torrents, the wind, the rain, the clouds, the starry worlds, the all-pervading sun — all, he worshipped as his gods and goodly powers.

This was the fabled Golden Age of man: when ignorance was bliss; when the serpent's fang was yet unpoisoned and the leopard's touch aroused no shudder. Legends of this fabled time of peace may be discerned even in so comparatively recent a work as the Bible. Here man was first pictured as the companion of the beasts. Eve and Adam, first of mortals, walk in fearless companionship with the serpent; and Adam seems so well acquainted with the characteristics of all animals, that Jehovah asks him to give to each a name as they pass before him in grand review!

But ere long this early time of peace and mutual trust is transformed into a period of strife and mutual fear. Then man's deities become his devils. The thing he once loved he learns to hate; every object once his friend becomes his enemy. His whole conception of nature then changes. He believes that all the world is now composed of a multiplicity of monsters which use him as the especial butt of their enmity, on whom to ply their forces of evil to his destruction. Hence man learned to stoop, to crouch, to cower.

He fell from glory to dishonor—from fortitude to infirmity. He became cunning, guileful, treacherous, deceitful. He learned to think of others as he

thought of himself. He conceived that the gods he once obeyed and adored were now designing demons who ever plotted his defeat—they were the secret cause of all his suffering.

When disease falls upon him—some demon has infected him. Smitten with infirmity — some harpy-footed power of the air is wreaking vengeance on him. When torrents come from the sky and inky blackness shrouds the day—he thinks fell demons are upon him like swarming armies of destruction. Helpless, alone, unpitied, his puny arm is lifted against the universe. "A hostile power is in arms against him—armed with sunbeam, thunderbolt, flood, and gale. His life is a contest with this power that is in his path and about his bed, thwarting him, wounding him, blighting his happiness, smiting him with disease, and finally dragging him underground to rottenness." [1]

Thus developed man's theory of evil and suffering, from experience and crude reasoning.

But anon he perceived another truth. While at first he believed that all was good and then afterward that all was evil, he discerned at times that the good and bad were mixed. What at one time overtook him as an evil at another was beneficent. The drouthy sun and death-breeding simoom were demons of destruction. But in the spring-time the selfsame sun shed mild and life-giving rays on his rudely tilled fields, and in the autumn-time ripened his much-loved fruits. Then was the sun his god — his protector and the giver of good things. When the wind came not in simoom or gale but in spicy,

[1] Baring-Gould, *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, p. 325.

vernal zephyrs, then was it a goodly messenger and adored as a deity.

In the hymns of the Vedas, traces of this early disposition are discernible. "Destroy not our offspring, O Indra, for we believe in thy mighty power." "When Indra hurls again and again his thunderbolt then they believe in the brilliant god." In these passages, Indra is feared as the deity of danger, revenge, and punishment. But again: "If you wish for strength offer to Indra a hymn of praise." "Wise and mighty are the works of him who stemmed asunder the wide firmament [heaven and earth]. He lifted on high the bright and glorious firmament." "Thou art the giver of horses, Indra, thou art the giver of cows, the giver of corn, the strong lord of wealth, the old guide of man, disappointing no desires, a friend to friends—to him we address this song." [1]

Here we discern the dual attitude of the primitive mind toward the deities—affected wholly by his daily experience. As says Keary, "The world around us is what we believe it to be and nothing more." But out of these opposing dispositions of fear and trust, ensuing from man's interpretation of nature's forces as they affected him, followed in course of time his conceptions of Heaven and Hell—the eternal good and the eternal bad.

Gradually the idea of immortality unfolded to the human consciousness. When man was still but a nomad, a wanderer, a mere beast of the field, his breast could have entertained but little human affection. He may have loved as the horse or dog

[1] Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i., pp. 31, 42.

or cat loves, perhaps a little more, but merely through the sense of companionship. A lasting sense of love—a love that lives in the well-springs of being and establishes the foundations of hope and bliss—such love he could not yet have known. But gradually, as he congregates in tribal relations and anon in village communities and at last in familyhood, that love which to-day constitutes the woof and web of our social fabric began to germinate.

When once that deep affection smote his breast man was no longer a beast but a thing divine. He loved his love and he desired not that his love should die. Hence his clinging to those he loved even after their bodies were buried or burned in the final rites of death.

"The placing of clothing, utensils of cooking, and implements of war with the dead was the custom of our European ancestors, and is that of the American Indians to this day. Sometimes the horse or dog, the slaves, or the wife of the deceased were slain to accompany the dead to the shadow-realm and attend to his comforts there. The Indians light a fire on the grave of the deceased and maintain it for several days, to light him on his journey. Combs and mirrors have been found in the ancient tombs—proofs that their fair occupants were expected to be as greatly addicted to vanity in the spirit world as in that of the flesh." [1]

We also learn that: "Among the Aryans the love of the departed so affected their religious faith as to gradually bring whole tribes to the seashore—that

[1] Baring-Gould, *Origin of Religious Belief*, vol. i., p. 88.

mysterious Sea of Death—in search of that fictitious paradise to which their loved ones had gone. They especially honored their heroes and leaders by placing their bodies on a boat and, setting it afire, sending it afloat mid-flame upon the stormy deep. What could they have meant by this rite but that their heroes should go forth to other fields of glory surrounded with the splendor of a departing ovation as a credential for future honors in the paradise beyond?"[1]

We can almost hear them chant their requiems by ocean side and river bank, as they cast their burdens of love upon the waters and watch them float away with flame-sails into the mist-mantled bosom of the deep.

> Forever they wander without halt or a pause,
> Like the waves of a mystical river;—
> Floating on, floating on, to the unseen shore
> Of a sea that is silent forever.

The worship of his ancestors represents the first phase of religion which the primitive man expressed. The longing to still abide with them gradually developed into the hope for their return. The wish was father to the hope, the hope to the thought; and they grew to believe that their ancestors did return.

Hence the legendary lore of ghosts and goblins—of apparitions and spirits.

At length—the forces of retribution and compensation warring in the breast of man — he conceived that those who left this world unrewarded would in the hereafter secure that reward, and they who here

[1] Keary, *Outlines of Primitive Belief*, pp. 280, 284.

escaped their retribution would in the unseen world suffer their merited punishment. The spirit of vengeance, ungratified, tears the heart with feverish torment. The uncouth savage having learned to hate the human agent who brought grief to his breast and woe to his door, curses his outgoing and his future. Coupling the love of his ancestors with the thought of future existence, he finds herein a healing balm for his feverish breast by believing that his enemy, here unavenged, has gone forth upon his curses to learn, beyond the grave, his meed of woe.

The quenchless fires of vengeance in the human breast gave rise to the thought of the quenchless fires of punishment hereafter. The vice of hate holds in its grip the immortal soul, and conjures for its solace a ghoulish god who will obey its dictum.

Hate is the womb which gave birth to Hell.

Vengeance is the bosom which nursed the deadly adder.

Fear was the tyrannous god-father which named the eternal fate for weal or woe.

Death was the weapon which tyranny raised to terrorize the race.

Before the dark god of fear the whole world fell in awe. Beyond the grave was darkness—yet beyond was life! How full of possible horrors for the untutored mind! Eternal life in eternal darkness —what horror more horrible! Out of such small beginnings of thought came forth the dreams of Heaven and the nightmares of Hell. The world and all the universe are indeed as we believe them to be and nothing more.

Having thus sketched, in rough outline, the origin

and growth of the sentiments of good and evil—Heaven and Hell—it would be instructive to discover the extent to which these ideas entered into theologies and religions, and finally how and why they became incorporated in the Christian religion.

The poetic sentiment of love seems scarcely capable of such perversion as is found in its distortive representations in mediæval theology. But, like all things human, we shall discover that its beauty was not suddenly lost, but had slowly deteriorated, as it was basely abused by selfish utilitarians. Priestly theology soon learned to turn to its advantage the fear of mystery and the dread uncertainty of the unseen world.

What mystery more opportune for such jugglery than the sombre gloom which enshrouds the grave? What spot so soft as the human heart when smitten with grief? Even in those ancient Aryan requiems we may hear the plaintive wail—the groan of the broken heart. What wonder that man should have been awed by his surroundings! What wonder that his native imagination transformed external phenomena into poetic fancy, which at length grew into myth, tradition, legend, and theology! We can catch a glimpse of this great truth in the Epic of the Eddas. No more, however, than in the mythology of all antiquity.

Conceive, for a moment, the glories of the aurora borealis. We who live in the semi-sombre atmosphere of this zone may well forestall, by imagination, the speechless wonder which would seize us were we first to behold that most dramatic phantasmagoria of sun-phases on sky and snow and ice.

The Teutons portrayed their emotions in their legends relating to their god Loki. In the story of his funeral pyre we detect the imagery inspired by the splendors of the aurora borealis.

Loki is the god of evil—enemy of both gods and men. Fire, at first dangerous, at last the friend of man, is the emblem of this dark god. He is surrounded by flame, through whose circumference man must pass to the place of eternal sleep. He is pictured as seizing his faithful steeds and plunging into the sea of fire (the aurora borealis) and then disappearing. Men, heroes, and gods follow him. Some return—some never. On, on, to the dark, icy regions, beyond the dismal iron-wood, where all is night,—the Land of Shade,—to the very house of Death, where reigned King Death guarded by his two dogs. We need not penetrate much deeper into the mythology of antiquity to discover all the norms around which gathered the legendary superstition of mediæval Christianity concerning Hell.

Indeed, it will be discovered by students that the Scandinavian legends are much responsible for the dark, gloomy phases of Christian theology — especially concerning Hell and the Devil.[1]

But it will interest and instruct us to trace this thread of imagery through Greek thought before it entered more fully into Christian mythology. We can easily discern the story of Loki and the sun-flamed steed of Death in the wanderings of Ulysses to the far borders of Hades across the dark and

[1] I have elsewhere (in my "Evolution of the Devil") traced in full the growth of Scandinavian mythology into the Devil and Hell theology of mediæval Christianity.

stormy deep. Students believe that the river mentioned in the wanderings of the Odyssey is none other than the Caspian Sea, that far-northern Oceanus which lies in the midst of the "Cimmerian land" where Hades was located:

"Where the mournful Cimmerians dwell, there the sun never throws
His bright beams, when to scale the high star-vault in the morning he goes;
Or earthward returns from the midday rest; for the gloom
Of night never ending reigns there — a perpetual gloom.[1]"

Here we meet with the same dark, Cimmerian wood as in the Eddas, into whose depths the light of modern civilization had not yet penetrated, and whither, it was supposed, the spirits of the departed wandered, perhaps never to return.

Is it not thus very evident that the whole legend concerning Hades—the Cimmerian land—perpetual gloom—emanated from the existence of an impenetrable forest of midnight darkness, where the foot of man had not yet trod? What could be blacker, darker, more horror-brooding, than the primeval Teutonic forests? Gradually the idea developed that entrance to this dark abode was through a deep burial gate, inasmuch as it was a place of darkness and only through darkness could it be approached. As in the Vedas:

[1] Od., xi., 12 *sqq.* See Keary, *Outlines*, p. 277.

" Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay:
Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy! "

But the primitive conception of the place of the dead seems to have been one of hollowness; of emptiness. The departed were passive, wandering " simulacra of mortals "— senseless, unintelligent. We may discern this early, primitive notion concerning the dead even in the initial Jewish mythology, which, by the way, reveals its antique legendary origin.

" But man dieth and he is gone!
Man expireth, and where is he ?
The waters fail from the lake,
And the stream wasteth and drieth up;
So man lieth down and riseth not;
Till the heavens be no more, he shall not wake,
Nor be roused from his sleep.
O, that Thou wouldst hide me in the under-world! " [1]

" Sheol shall not praise Thee, Jehovah,
The dead shall not celebrate Thee,
They that go down into the pit shall not hope for Thy truth." [2]

By slow degrees the Hadean population becomes animated, and the dwellers of the nether world become active with exertions for good or ill. " Hell becomes a being. Most likely this being was at first endowed with the figure of some ravenous animal, some bird or beast of prey, a wolf, a

[1] Job xiv. 10–13 (Noyes's translation).
[2] Isaiah xxxviii. 18, 19.

lion, a hawk, a dog. In mythology a shade more elaborate, the same thing is represented by imaginary creatures,—dragons, griffins, what not. The dragons which we meet with in mediæval legends were once, most of them, in some way or other embodiments of Death. At the door of the Strassburg cathdral and in one of the stained-glass windows within, the reader may see a representation of the mouth of Hell in the form of a great dragon's head spouting flame."[1]

In the old mission cathedral at Tucson, Ariz., I saw a mediæval painting representing Hell in the form of an impossible monster whose vast mouth, red-lined, was wide expanded and into which hordes of human beings were tumbling, and, if too slow, were whipped along by accommodating demons.

The speechless, voiceless House of the Dead is thus gradually galvanized into life until it becomes the most fascinating condition of after-death existence. Slowly in Jewish thought — not, however, until after the Captivity—the notion of a personified Hell succeeds to that of the abode of the passive dead.

But faint hints of this post-Captivity conception may be found in the ancient Hebrew writings. In one breath the Psalmist exclaims:

"For in death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?" (vi. 5); and

"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (xvii. 15).

[1] Keary, *Primitive Outlines*, p. 269.

Only by a forced interpretation can such exclamations be made to refer to after-existence. He meant that his God would guard him while he slept; and when he awoke in His likeness (as he elsewhere says, "in the light of His countenance"—Ps. iv. 6), then he would have strength to cope with the enemies of whom he had been complaining.

CHAPTER VI

THE MYTH OF HELL, OR THE HUMAN HEART EXPLORED (*Continued*)

ANCIENT Hebrew thought is silent as to after-death experience. Post-Captivity Jewish thought, complexioned by Persian mythology,—which in turn was itself complexioned by gloomy Scandinavian legend,—speaks more clearly of the life of the dead, but only in faint tones as compared with mediæval Christianity.

But here it might be pertinently asked, Why should we search the Bible for proof of Hell after death? Because it has more authority? Because of its inspiration? Truth forbids this.

No, we search the Bible, as other books of antiquity, merely to learn in what manner this Hell-dogma developed out of primitive fancy and idealism into the horrible realism of ecclesiastic formulæ. But it seems to me that even the Bible does not clearly and indisputably sustain this repulsive doctrine, and it is not a difficult task to show that the vague passages on which theologians base the dogma cannot be as positively interpreted in their behalf as they would wish.

The word "Hell" itself clearly reveals its pagan or natural origin. Originally it was in no sense a theological term. It did not primarily mean even the place of the dead. It meant merely a concealed or covered place. The word is derived from the Saxon word "Helan"—to cover—signifying merely to conceal or cover.[1] The word afterwards became personified in Hel—the ogress of the abode of Loki. She was the Proserpine of the Scandinavian mythology. It is from that mythology, as I have said, that the personification of the Devil and literal interpretation of Hell developed.

Now, the Bible employs three principal words which cover this subject, and which have constituted the storm-centres of theological discussion for ages. These words are: Sheol, Hades, Gehenna. Sheol occurs 65 times in the Old Testament. In the A. V. it is represented 31 times by "grave"; 31 times by "hell"; 3 times by "pit." Now, "Hell," representing "Sheol" in the Old Testament 31 times, is in the New Testament the translation of Hades and Gehenna. "Hades" in the New Testament is translated by "Hell" 11 times. "Gehenna" is translated by "Hell" 12 times.

Now, let us see if we can get at the exact meaning of these words. Unless Hades and Gehenna can be shown to sustain the mediæval interpretation, of course the Old-Testament term Sheol will not count at all. If we can show that Hades and Gehenna are purely figurative terms and arose out of sympathetic communication with pagan nations, among whom no positive theology existed, it will

[1] McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, s.v.

then be evident that the Bible will present no valid apology for the existence and permanence of so revolting a dogma as the one we are now considering.

The original meaning of the term Hades is similar to that of the Saxon term Helan. It is derived from two Greek words meaning "not seen"—invisible.[1] Thus the original meaning of Hades was, like Hell, the concealed or covered place of the dead—the grave. Afterward it came to mean the abode of the living dead—but of the good as well as the bad. "There is in the Hades of the New Testament an equally ample signification with the Sheol of the Old Testament as the abode of both the happy and miserable spirits."[2]

I am quoting very orthodox authority. Hades is, therefore, not at all Hell—in the exclusive, reprehensible, damnatory sense of the creed.

Now as to Gehenna, the more terrible term of the New Testament. This term is composed of two Hebrew words which mean "Valley of Hinnom." Hinnom was the name of the proprietor of the valley. The Septuagint calls it the "Valley of the son of Hinnom." Thus we discover at once a *local* coloring to the term. Hence it must indicate something for which the Valley of Hinnom emphatically stood. This valley was to the ancient Jews a place of abominations—for there was established the worship of the barbarous gods, Chemosh and Molech. Afterward it became the place of common sewage for the city of Jerusalem, and in Talmudic times, in the literature of mediæval

[1] Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, s.v.

[2] McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, s.v.

Judaism, was figuratively employed to indicate the condition of the damned.

It will, however, be an important fact to remember that this term was not employed by the Jews till after the Captivity. It is, therefore, plain that the Jews had acquired from their Babylonian captors a harsher and more dismal notion concerning the condition of the dead than they had previously entertained.

At this juncture, then, when the Jewish thought mingles with the Persian, which itself is fathered by the Scandinavian, we discern the natural, mythological origin of this now so revolting dogma. When Hell becomes the theological place of the damned, we behold again Loki—and Hel, the ogress of the cave of the Cimmerian land where abides perpetual gloom. Not only this Eddaic gloom enters into post-Captive Jewish theology, but also the Persian or Zoroastrian Dualism, which they discovered in Babylonia. Here entered, in their theology, the personal Devil. With him came the sulphurous Hell and all the sufferings of Gehenna fire, so vividly pictured in the New Testament.

Of course, casuists may be able to explain away the figurative meaning of Gehenna, but it is difficult to do so when we find it in such an expression as this, alleged to be from the lips of Jesus: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." The reference here, of course, is to the well-known fire of Gehenna, whose smoke was continually arising from the burning of the city's waste. The reference

is purely figurative. Nevertheless, He undoubtedly meant the expression to be illustrative of a perpetual condition of the soul.

Those who are so crude as to be bound by the literalism of the Bible must needs believe in the possibilities of a terrible condition for the so-called "damned." But when we make allowance for the high coloring of the oriental imagination it will be at once perceived that the emphatic and literal interpretation which modern theology has put on the words of Jesus is wholly unwarranted.

It cannot, however, be denied that in the primitive Church a very gloomy interpretation was placed on the teachings concerning the state of the damned. A literal "hell fire" was almost universally believed in. This is not to be wondered at considering the exposure of the early Christians to persecution and martyrdom. But there was by no means a settled or fixed interpretation of the doctrine among the fathers and some of the most learned and influential among them boldly discarded the literal and repulsive teaching which declared a literal fire and an eternal condition of misery.

Among these the most significant was the great preacher and philosopher Origen. He was one of the clearest headed and most illuminated of all the fathers of the Church. His teachings were so much against the dogmatic conclusions of subsequent mediævalism that the later teachers found his books so dangerous and reprehensible they were all ordered to be burned and his bones resurrected from the grave and consumed with them. And, three hundred years after his death, he was declared a

heretic. This alone proves the decadence of the Church and its gradual recession from the exalted height which the spiritual leaders of the early Church had attained.

Origen insinuates that the eternal fire is neither material nor kindled by another person, but that the combustibles are the sins themselves of which conscience reminds us; thus the fire of hell resembles the fire of the passions. The consuming fire of these passions was itself punishment which would continue till the unholy powers were wholly destroyed. For he further taught that the end of all these punishments was to heal and correct the victim, and thus finally to restore the sinner to the favor of God. (Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, sec. 78.)

But how futile, how puerile, all this dispute over a dogma that has so surreptitiously crept into the teachings of a Church which has borrowed all its doctrines and its rites from pre-existing religions and usages! It is very evident that neither the Bible nor the writings of the early fathers can give us as much light on this doctrine as comes from the legends and stories of the ancient nations which existed so many centuries previous to the advent of Christianity. When, therefore, we discover the purely natural and evolutional origin of a dogma which has played so ghoulish a rôle in the drama of thought, it is time we should relegate it to its proper sphere—that we should let it be classified with the effete mythologies of an effete and forgotten past.

The astonishing and repulsive feature, however, of

this myth of Hell is, that as it penetrates the period of intellectual refinement and modern civilization it grows more and more hideous, and loses all the poetry and phantasy which enhaloed it at its primeval origin. There is, certainly, poetry and beauty, a certain sombre tinge of pathos, in the legends of flame-encircled Loki, his faithful dog, and Hel, his cave-bound ogress; of Proserpine and Pluto; of Isis and Osiris and the evil genius, Typhon; of Circe, and Odysseus, whose wanderings in Hades are so replete with imagery and spiritual signification; of Eurydice, and Orpheus, whose lamentations made the hollow vault of Hell reverberate with the sense of his spiritual loss—but all these stories are simple, human, and natural. They are full of engrossing interest because they neither contradict human nature nor are they revolting to one's contemplation.

But how gross, how abusive and repulsive, have these same legends become when reduced to the literalistic and forensic pictures of mediævalized mythological theology! This theology consists of three salient features, each of which rivals the other in repulsiveness. There is a God, who sits as tempter, tormentor, and judge, in one, acting in collusion with His great protagonist, the Devil, to whom *carte blanche* is given to corral all his wandering human sheep and pitch them, when condemned, with one fell swoop into the ever-burning pit, whose sulphurous stenches become a "sweet-smelling savor" to the susceptible Host of the Orgy.

Hel, the ogress of the cave, daughter of the giantess Angurboda, wife of Loki, who sits a saturnine object of perpetual gloom at the "eastern

gate," and broods and broods, and thirsts for the victims that must come, is an object of poetic beauty beside the mythical Ghoul which mediæval theology has presented to us as a God.

All the beauty of earth's childhood hope seems to have been metamorphosed in that middle age of darkness into Gorgonian horrors and Medusa heads! Primarily, love and sweetness, ambition and hope, were inspired by the legendary songs; but when the coarse brain of the Crusader and the weird fanatics of the caves—the anchorites and the pillar "saints" —seized upon them, they chilled the blood and stalled the heart.

In the Middle Ages, when Odin-worship had been overthrown and the gods of Asgaard descended to Hel-home, Odin still pursued his office of conductor and leader of souls. But now he hounded them to the underworld. Thus we see that the simple, hardy, ruffian, but good-natured, god of childhood religion becomes the tormentor, the pursuer, the fierce avenger of the mediæval religion.

And, strange to remark, we who live in all the splendor of this modern age of intelligence have not yet outgrown its pall of gloom! The churches still reverberate with its awful tone of terror; revivalists with pale lips and sunken eyes still picture the final scenes of woe before affrighted audiences who falter, faint, and lose their senses in the scramble after salvation. Oh, that more poetry would enter into our lives! — that fancy would succeed perverted fact, and that the song of childish hope would supplant the stultifying credulity of age!

I have sought in this chapter to study the doctrine of Hell purely from the naturalistic view-point. I have therefore avoided entering into the endless and profitless discussion of theologians as to the possible Bible interpretations of the idea. Having determined to regard the Bible only as literature which but reflects the mode of thought of its own age, it matters not what apparently authoritative teaching the Bible gives concerning Hell. It is of no more essential value, so far as its conclusions or its compulsory acceptance may go, than are the legends of ancient peoples or the mythologies of defunct religions.

We cannot understand the Bible except as we compare it with other sacred literatures. We cannot understand religious dogmas except by pursuing their natural origin and development. When separated from the delusion of supernaturalism and inspiration, we learn that these affrighting dogmas are but the offspring of the human imagination. Once conceived, they are enforced through the natural love of tyranny. When thus enforced, they become unimaginative, reprehensive, and contradictory of human experience. Only by freeing ourselves from the error of such delusions can we discern a deeper and purer meaning in the doctrines which all religions have, in some form, fostered.

What, then, shall we do with the dogma of Hell? Having shorn it of its supernatural locks, and reduced it to its natural lineaments, has it now for us nothing but repulsiveness, and shall we banish it from our gallery of thought? I think not. Why? Because I think there is truth, evidenced in the

experience of the race, which may be elucidated by the abused doctrine, and thus lead him who understands to a loftier plane of being.

Hell is, indeed, darkness, and justly associated with darkness. But error also is darkness—for it is the shadow cast by the presence of truth. Were there no truth there would be no error. Or, conversely, did not error enter into thought, truth would be inconceivable. In short, knowledge is relative. Everything is known only by contrast and comparison. We know light as light because there is darkness; and, conversely, we call darkness night because we know the day. To know darkness proves that also light must be known. The knowledge of error is, therefore, proof of the knowledge of truth.

To apprehend Good we must be acquainted with Evil. All knowledge has, therefore, a double face. It is as a coin whose obverse and reverse sides are essential to its existence. With only one side a coin could not be. Likewise knowledge must consist of both truth and error—else there were no knowledge. We know error that we may see the truth. We apprehend truth that we may escape error. Did I not know that air could not sustain my weight I might attempt to walk on the atmosphere. Experience would teach me the truth, but first through error. Did I not know that blood would flow, and pain follow, and death come on apace, I might for sport pierce my body with weapons, or thrust my hands into the flame.

On the contrary, knowing I cannot walk on the air, I avoid stepping from the housetop. Knowing

I would perish, I do not pierce my heart with weapons—unless I am bent on death.

Manifestly, knowledge of truth can come to us only through knowledge of error. In other words, we are made wise only through experience. By experience we learn. But experience begins in ignorance. Ignorance is error. Error—darkness—is, therefore, the foundation of human knowledge. Error, as I have said, is the basis of truth. Paradox though this be, it is a philosophic fact. But error is darkness and darkness is Hell! Hell is the covered place, the place of gloom, of foreboding, " of lawless and incertain thoughts."

To dwell in these thoughts of gloom, of unhallowed darkness, of fear, of narrow limitation, of torturing confinement—is to dwell with error, with darkness, with Hell. To pervert this life, to believe that it is encompassed with evil influences, that man is a " fallen " being and is inherently and totally depraved, in whom is nothing good—this is error, darkness, Hell. To dwell in the thoughts of hatred, of vengeance, of red-clouded war, of direful anger—this is error—this is Hell. To believe that you are bound by the limitations of the body, the fixed forms of confluent atoms, the narrowness of traditional thought, the hereditary powers of the aggregate race—this is error, darkness, Hell.

To believe that error is more potent than truth, to disbelieve in the all-potency of truth, to be turned by every wind of doctrine and become but the child of impulse—this is error, Hell. To narrow the horizon of one's being and think only in

the past—brooding over sorrows, nursing pain and hugging melancholy—this is darkness, Hell. To be bestial and baneful and bloodthirsty, setting traps for your neighbor, cunning, designing, intriguing, seeking selfish ends by atrocious methods, to obey passion rather than conscience, to love indulgence better than sacrifice—this is error, darkness, Hell. Hell is at once a condition and a creation of thought. Heaven is likewise. Think truth, we become the truth. Think error, we become error. Think light, and one is full of light. Think darkness, and one is overshadowed by the night.

Our thoughts are the basis of our responsibility. There is nothing but thought. We dwell in Heaven when we entertain heavenly thoughts,—when our minds are bent on goodness, truth, and beauty. We dwell in Hell when our minds are of the night—black with the inky gloom of vengeance or "sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of fear and woe.

"I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered, "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell:

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire."[1]

This is all there is of Hell.

But one asks, Is there no future—is all life

[1] Omar Khayyam's *Ruba'iydt* (Fitzgerald), lxxx.

existent but here on this evanescent sphere? Are we forced to conclude:

"One thing is certain and the rest is lies:
The flower that once has blown forever dies"?

One thing is sure: thought lives while lives the human mind. If the human mind be eternal, thought is eternal. Thought is the seat of Heaven —the substance of Hell. If we think forever we shall be forever in Heaven or Hell—for we dwell in our own thoughts alone. Wherein need we fear, then, the curse of Judgment the Great Court shall decree at the Last Assize? It is not this we need fear—but somewhat more awful. Such a Court might relent—it might heed the cry and tear of the mournful sinner.

"O Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

O Thou who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd — Man's Forgiveness give — and take!"

Such pleas of logic and tender pathos might conquer a man-like judge. But a Judge, a Court of Last Resort, more terrible, more certain, more irrevocable, haunts us each hour and day. We sit at its Judgment Bar every moment. Every second we hear its decrees. They are registered on the leaves of our lives and lettered even on our veins and sinews.

This ever-present Judge is the all-potent Thought. He sits stern, relentless, unconquerable. Each moment he writes his swift decisions upon the vital forces of our being. He carves the very features of our visages, he orders the pulses of the brain, he counts and directs the palpitations of the heart, he breathes in the respiration of our lungs, he poses in our gestures and mesmerizes our attitudes. We cannot escape him.

"The moving finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it."

What need to preach a Hell eternal, when a potential Hell so realizable is ever with us? And yet, what a consolation have we even in this philosophy! For we need not dwell in Hell. We keep ever with us the Master Magic by which we may prevail. We carry ever with us our Aladdin's Lamp which we are free to rub that we may receive its wondrous blessings.

Our Master Key to this Magic is our WILL. The Lamp of Aladdin is our THOUGHT.

We can uplift ourselves from Hell to Heav'n,
From Darkness unto Light, as Gloom is riv'n
By one swift Gleam of Splendor, e'en though dark
Were all the world, entombed. By one bright Spark
Our Thoughts with Hope ignite, and thus illume
Our breasts, where erst dwelt Monsters of the Gloom!

CHAPTER VII

GOD MADE FLESH, OR THE MYTH OF HUMAN DEIFICATION

THE doctrine of the Incarnation is at once the most stupendous and dramatic of all human conceptions. By slow stages only did man rise to the conception of a Deity. Primarily, the only god was the power manifested in the plant or the rock, the river or the tree.

Man was a timid wanderer in this vast ocean of possibilities. Curiosity was his demon, danger his Nemesis. Yet dauntlessly he pushed forward, hoping all things, trying all things, till he became conqueror of the planet. At length he cast his vision beyond, to read, if possible, the horoscope of the Infinite.

The god, then, who was once his immediate companion, dwelling in rock or tree, river or plant, became the invisible indweller of the universe. The finite rock man could compass with his senses and his consciousness. The immeasurable universe was beyond his comprehension. His eager thought throbbed from finite to infinite, and conditioned the God of the boundless, as it had previously conditioned the God of limitations.

Hence, a thousand errors, an ocean of incongruities.

But from the hour the fetish-worshipper heard in the wail of the wind the groan of his god, to the present moment, when the devout devotee gazes upward for the interventions of special providences, the idea of incarnations — of deities indwelling in physical limitations—prevailed in human thought.

Indeed, we must study the primitive savage, the crude fetish-worshipper, if we would discover the prophecy of its great influence upon the history of the race. The loneliness of man, his ignorance—these were the primitive conditions that led not only to his search after a God, but to his companionship with physical nature. Most truly hath the poet written:

" The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
. . . . . .
To spread the roof above him—ere he framed
The lofty vault to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems, in the darkling wood,
He offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication. For his simple heart
Might not resist the sacred influences
Which — from the stilly twilight of the place,
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once
All their green tops—stole over him, and bowed
His spirit with the thought of boundless power
And inaccessible majesty."

Man was a child of the forest, a friend of the

wandering beasts (which, perhaps, were not primarily dangerous). He made his meals by day on the nuts and fruits of the trees, and slept o' nights beneath their "mossy boughs," mantled by the overarching skies.

Anon, mingled with his various expressions, he heard his voice—a strange, weird, unwonted, and uncanny sound, that seemed to him, at first, to come from without.

I imagine this human voice must have been man's first cause of fear.

Whence did it come? It was not like unto that of the wild beasts among which he wandered, for it seemed somewhat more capable of articulation and expression. It was unlike the shriek of the mighty birds, or the whistle of the winds. Moreover, man soon discerned that this human voice evidenced an individuality quite unlike that of the wild beasts or birds. They seemed to possess voices in common, alike for each class and species. But each man seemed to be endowed with a voice which marked his individual identity, which distinguished him not only from all the lower animals, but from every other individual *man* on the earth. This was the most marvellous feature of the voice of man, and signified a weird and uncanny origin.

Who has not been startled in the deep of a dark forest, where nothing is heard but "the sound of the silence," when of a sudden words escape from one's lips, to fall in broken echoes on the wood?

Hence, how weird, how startling, must have been the first conscious expression of human speech!

Of course it was not a sudden manifestation. It

came by slow degrees. Nature knows no leaps. Nevertheless, the existence of the voice—the discovery of the faculty of speech—was the initial step in man's progress, and the especial instrument which led to his conception of incarnate deities.

For, palpably, the voice was different from, something other than, the man. It was an indwelling personality—it was an ever-abiding presence.

Here was a unique, a tremendously suggestive, discovery.

Even we, in the far advance of our evolution, cannot wholly free ourselves from the notion that our speech (whether audible or silent) is the expression of a something other than ourselves. If not, why do we talk to ourselves ? why do we argue and contend with ourselves ? why do we chide and praise ourselves ? why do we lie to and deceive ourselves ?—if the external expression of the voice has not unconsciously led us into self-segregation ? It is the voice that seems to have separated us from ourselves. For the voice is the source as well as the organ of speech. Without voice there would be no language; without language, speech (or lip-communion) were impossible.

This is evident when we study our mental moods. No thought ever comes to us in silence that is not voiced by the inward speech. Each word, each syllable, finds silent utterance. Without the inward, inaudible voice we would be without definite thought or intelligence.

Therefore, man's discovery of his voice was the first great event (and perhaps the most momentous) in the whole drama of human development.

At first, doubtless, the voice seemed to come from without, from another. Anon, the individual discerned that it came not from without, from another—but from within, from himself. Nevertheless, though from himself, it seemed to emanate from another self within himself. The human voice was, then, as I read the origins of history, the first suggestion of incarnation.

Man, who was a mere atom in this vast universe, who soon so learned to fear the elements and the unseen powers, was not slow to conceive that there dwelt within himself an Adviser—a Protector—to whom he might flee in hours of struggle and privation.

This was the first vague conception of incarnation, as we read it in the childhood experiences of the race.

Strange prophecy—poetic reality! After countless ages of evolution, man returns now by the light of science and religion to his primal childhood conception and realizes that the only God in the universe is the indwelling God—the only temples in which he can truly worship, the temples not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (the ever-present spiritual atmosphere).

"God is Spirit: . . . worship Him in Spirit and in Truth."

By an easy transition, the primitive man transferred the notion of an incarnate deity (or power) from himself to the world without.

If his voice were the God within, why were there not gods indwelling in every element that succored him — in every physical feature of nature that seemed endowed with superior powers?

The winds that sweep down from mountain heights, and howl and shriek—are they not gods, made audible by their uncanny speech ?

The sun, whose majestic presence overrides the heavens and dazzles all the world with his glory—is he not, indeed, a great god as he sallies forth to the battle of the day through long, triumphant hours ?

The rivers that overflow and enrich the valleys which bear for man the golden grain and blushing fruit—are not these, indeed, the abiding-places of the gods, who thus ever manifest their goodness ?

Thus, in time, the world was peopled with gods almost as numerous as the men upon its surface.

It was only by a deteriorating process of civilization that the god came to dwell in the sculptured stone and radiant marble. But while the broad, free, robust conception of the primitive man was lost in the more refined and æsthetic ideal of the Egyptian or the Greek, the later conception indicated a more recent discovery in the knowledge of mankind, namely, the existence of the beautiful—which expanded into great importance in human progress.

The so-called idolatry of the ancient religions was but a phase of the conception of incarnation.

Primarily, the glorious statue was not itself the worshipful object, but the god, the mysterious indwelling being whom it represented, whose ideal it purported to incarnate.

Pygmalion did not adore the marble Galatea, the mere physical form he had created; he bowed before that splendid statue because it seemed to externalize the entrancing ideal of his soul; not till the marble statue was transformed into living,

speaking flesh and blood was his heart's joy full; not until the incarnate deity of love and beauty whom he adored, threw off the stony mantle and revealed herself did he stand transfixed in the presence of the divine.

This is the meaning of the old mythology.

Just as the fetish-worshipper consecrated every tree, or rock, or river, or mount, within which he believed a god indwelt, so the devotees of Osiris and Isis, of Juno and Jupiter, of Athene and Apollo, or of Pluto and Proserpine bowed before the triumphant masterpieces of their religious artists and sculptors, because, originally, they believed gods and goddesses dwelt within the voiceless marble.

Even among the Semites, whose instinct seemed to suggest unity—who sought the convergence of the universal ALL in the mysterious symbol of the ONE—even they primarily sought for this one God in the objects of nature and the workmanship of human hands.

Moses finds Him in the burning bush; Aaron, in the Golden Calf; Samuel, in his Ebenezer (a pile of consecrated rocks); the wandering tribes, in the Shekina (cloud and flame); and the Temple worshippers, in the mystic Ark.

Not till in the far advance of the spiritual unfoldment of the Jewish people—till the nation engendered a far-visioned Isaiah, a songful David, or a Jeremiah, the prophet of woes—were they able to throw off this species of idolatry and discern their God in the welling of spiritual aspirations and in the glorious handiwork of Creation.

At length, however, the primitive spiritual conception is lost and the inanimate object itself becomes the direct object of worship.

Then the people sink into idolatrous degradation, and their glorious ideals are obliterated.

But out of these beginnings came the common doctrine of the Incarnation in the various ethnic religions.

The Christian religion, however, emphasized into a supreme exaggeration the doctrine of the Incarnation. It sought to inculcate into the religious mind the notion that but once, in all the annals of human experience, the invisible Infinite enfolded Himself in the narrow mantle of human flesh and communed face to face with His own bewildered creatures. To our modern minds this conception conquers by its very audacity.

The Semitic thought had for ages conceived of Deity as invisible, unknowable, and unapproachable. He stood apart. The universe was not His robe, but His tool; not His expression, but His manipulation. He held the stars in the palms of His hands; He weighed the winds and carved the hollow for the waters of the deep.

"Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings for the rain; He bringeth the wind out of His treasuries" (Psalm cxxxv.).

He was not only unapproachable, but inconceivable. His countenance could not be cut in stone, like that of Jupiter or Ra, nor could His migrations

be reviewed in song or dream, like those of Mercury and Apollo.

His realm was beyond the contemplation of the human mind; the manner of His presence was undiscoverable. So ineffable was He, His name could not be uttered, much less written.

The multitude, which was benefited by His munificence, knew not the avenues of approach to His invisible pavilion; the consecrated priest alone was endowed with this precious wisdom, yet even he could discern the presence of the Mighty One only in the dark recesses of the "Holy of Holies," where unbroken silence reigned eternal; or in the sudden brilliance of the magic stones on Urim and Thummim, or in the mystic light that played upon the winged cherubim above the Ark.

"Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," was his cry, but the face of the Holy One he never beheld, for who should look upon the face of Jehovah would expire in the overpowering splendor of the vision.

True, there were among the Jews prevailing traditions that in primitive times God had revealed Himself in human form to the early leaders; but these traditions are so inconsistent and contradictory as to be of but little value.

At one time tradition said: "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. xxxii. 30). But in Ex. xxxiii. 20 we read: "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live."

"Then went up Moses and Aaron . . . and they saw the God of Israel" (Ex. xxiv. 9, 10).

" And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend " (Ex. xxxiii. 11).

But to realize how purely figurative and symbolic such language is, we need but read in Deut. v. 4: " The Lord talked with you face to face, in the mount, out of the midst of the fire." Here He addressed the vast multitude in the voice of thunder; His face was the lightning. In the same sense we must conceive that God talked to Moses and Jacob face to face. However literal these expressions seem to be, a but casual examination of the text speedily proves that the idea conveyed, even by this traditional lore, was not the actual, humanized, incarnate appearance of the invisible and mysterious Lord, but merely His majestic manifestation on great and momentous occasions.

For we have a specific description of the appearance of the Lord in Horeb, where, we have seen, the Bible in one place (Deut. v. 4) says: " The Lord talked with you face to face, in the mount, out of the midst of the fire." But the description of this event in an earlier chapter of the same book (Deut. iv. 11, 12 ff.) shows clearly that the appearance was not that of man to man, but simply symbolic and suggestive:

" Ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but *saw no similitude;* only a voice ye heard."

Moses severely chides the Jews lest they make a graven image of the Lord and worship it, reminding

them that they never saw any " similitude " or likeness of the Lord. Hence it is very evident the expression " face to face " could not have been taken literally, as to-day, and must be construed as figurative and hyperbolical.

Whatever traditional lore may have suggested as to epiphanies or incarnations of Deity in the early stages of Jewish history, certainly long before the advent of Jesus all such possibilities had vanished from the thought of the people. For ages they had been trained to think of Jehovah as the unthinkable, the unapproachable, the unknowable.

The prevailing conception of Deity, long before the advent of Jesus, was voiced in such exclamations as " For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live forever " (Deut. xxxii. 40); " Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called: I am He: I am the first, I also am the last " (Is. xlviii. 12); " Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting " (Ps. xciii. 2); " For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy " (Is. lvii. 15); "Who is able to build Him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him?" (2 Chr. ii. 6); " Whither shall I flee from Thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there " (Ps. cxxxix. 7, 8).

This age-ingrained national sentiment we find grandly voiced in the words of Paul: " Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto;

whom no man hath seen or can see" (1 Tim. vi. 15).

Viewed in the light of this ancient tradition, we may well appreciate the horror of the Jewish mind when the advent of Jesus was proclaimed as the humanized incarnation and physical appearance of the invisible Deity.

What wonder the Jew cried, "Execrable blasphemer!" when confronted by one of his own race who was proclaimed by the voice of his followers as the Very God—the Ancient of Days—the ineffable Jehovah!

The conception was so startling, so audacious, so defiant, the wonder is its proclamation was not slain in its inception. The wonder is the Jewish nation did not arise in its entirety and quell this Messianic uprising before its voice could be heard above the housetops.

The fact that Jesus was permitted to preach for three years; was allowed to enter the synagogues, read from the scriptures, and teach therein without molestation until He seemed to be developing into a political menace, is proof enough that He never could have proclaimed Himself, as have His followers ever since, for nigh nineteen hundred years, as the Very God, whose name was unspeakable, whose identity was concealed in that quaternity of letters—I H V H.

But in the Christian scheme, in that involved and abstruse theology which the metaphysical thought of the Middle Ages evolved from the simple Gospel narratives, the doctrine of the Incarnation becomes the corner-stone—at once the most momentous and impossible of all the teachings of the Church.

As the doctrine of the Incarnation was un-Semitic and contrary to tradition, the Jewish people defiantly rejected the Savior who was uplifted as the proclaimer of the repulsive invention.

Nevertheless, in the minds of the more refined and learned Jews the notion of the "Logos" had already found a comfortable reception. The doctrine of the Logos, or the Word, even as incarnate, we shall see, existed among the Grecianized Jews long before the advent of Jesus and several centuries before its proclamation by St. John.

Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, had taught the principles of the Logos—the Word-incarnate—just before the Jesuan epoch.

Thus, at the very threshold of Christianity, the theologians and doctrinaires are confronted with a very perplexing problem.

When John, alone of all the Gospel writers (writing at least a quarter and probably a half-century after the Synoptic Gospels), declares, "In the beginning was the Logos (Word) and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God," he speaks in language foreign and repulsive to all the orthodox Jewish followers of Jesus, but significantly suggestive of Philo and the Alexandrian school.

However, with their accustomed nonchalance and hauteur, the Christian dogmatists wave aside the insinuation that John may have become tinctured with neo-platonism, and was but echoing the Logos-doctrine already well established in progressive Jewish circles by Philo and the Alexandrianists. The argument in their behalf is forcibly put by Dorner, who insists that "Blinding as the resem-

blance between many of his ideas and modes of expression and those of Christianity may be to the superficial reader, yet the essential principle is to its very foundation diverse. Even that which sounds like the expressions of John has in its entire connection a meaning altogether diverse. His system stalks by the cradle of Christianity only as a spectral counterpart. It appears like the floating, dissolving *fata Morgana* on the horizon, where Christianity is about to rise."[1]

Notwithstanding the impressive earnestness of these remarks, any unprejudiced student of history acquainted with the several philosophic schools of Alexandria, Greece, and Asia, must be convinced that Dorner's exaggerated rhetoric is an effort to draw a thick veil over a very prejudicial fact. One is inclined to exclaim, "By heaven, he doth protest too much!" and immediately begin a search for the apparent truth he is seeking to conceal.

Once establish the fact that Philo's Logos was in all points an exact prophecy and forestatement of John's and Paul's, and you convict the Christian scheme of an apparent forgery, or at least an embarrassing plagiarism. But we shall be led to a still more serious and condemning conclusion if we closely follow the intimations of those ancient times.

Philo, forget not, was a devout Jew, like Paul, after "the most strictest sect." Moreover, he was a lineal descendant of the sacerdotal order, and most profoundly learned in all the wisdom of the law. He was a Pharisee, a teacher, or rabbi, in

[1] *Person of Christ*, vol. ii., pp. 198, 342.

the synagogue, as well as an earnest and comprehensive student of revived Hellenism. More than any other thinker of his day, he reflects the mind and method—the mysticism and allegorism—of the divine Plato. His hereditary bias was Semitic, but his mental culture and æsthetic taste were Hellenic. Though a Pharisee, he rejected all literalism, and sought after the spirit, or idea, of the Word.

Now, as will readily be seen from what follows, the description of the Logos in the writings of Philo is so similiar to those of the Johannine teachings that only a conscienceless casuist could differentiate them.

But a great problem here presents itself. Philo was the contemporary of Jesus and Paul. Why is it that Philo did not recognize in Jesus the veritable Paraclete—God made manifest in the flesh—about whom he had been so long and so eloquently discoursing? The casuists and dogmatists insist that Philo's Logos was never a personification; it was ever but an idea, an abstraction, an emanation, an impersonal radiation of the infinite God, and he was incapable of comprehending the fact of a real manifestation of Deity in human form. The writings of Philo, however, seem to belie this statement.

"Philo's doctrine would not itself suggest the application of the idea of the Logos to any historical appearance whatsoever; for the revelation of the Logos refers not exclusively to any single fact, but to everything relating to the revelation of God in nature and history"; so writes one.

If this be true, then how could Philo have conceived of this general revelator of the Infinite as manfesting in specific historic instances, which he specifies?

He says that He (the Logos) is "the first-born son of God"; "God's vicegerent in the world"; "the constructor of worlds" (the demiurge); he assigns Him to the office of "Mediator between God and the material universe"; He is the "High-priest of the world"; the advocate for the defects of men with God; and, in general, he attributes to Him the office of revealing the divine nature of Deity to mankind. This Logos of Philo is "the second God; the archangel who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, spoke to Jacob, and to Moses in the burning bush, and led the people of Israel through the wilderness; He is the High-priest and Advocate who pleads the cause of sinful humanity before God and procures for it the pardon of its sins."[1]

Here is a specification of every qualification which Christian theology has written into the person and office of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, the casuists insist that Philo could not have referred "the application of the idea of the Logos to any historical appearance whatsoever." Then, why does he specify its appearance in the burning bush, in the archangel who fought with Jacob at Peniel, in the three that appeared to Lot?

Why is every historical theophany or epiphany which is recorded in the Old Testament, and which every Christian theologian regards as the appearance

[1] McClintock and Strong, *Cyclo. Bib Lit.*, s.v. "Philo." This is strictly orthodox authority.

of Jesus Christ, regarded by Philo as an appearance of his Logos, if "the application of his idea of the Logos could not have referred to any historical appearance whatsoever"?

Why do the Johannine writings, and all orthodox writings since, employ in their descriptions of Jesus Christ the very terms, qualifications, and offices that Philo employs in describing his Logos, if it could have "referred to no historical appearance whatsoever"?

If Philo's Logos is impersonal, unhistorical, abstract, a mere idea, an emanation, a radiation of the Infinite Centre, then such must have been Jesus Christ, for in all respects the descriptions of the two are not only similar, but identical.

The troublesome and perplexing problem which confronts the Christian historian and theologian is this: That, notwithstanding Philo had so accurately and significantly described the very offices and person of Jesus Christ, so far as they have been ascribed to him in Christian theology, nevertheless Philo, the contemporary of Jesus Christ, is suggestively, significantly, tantalizingly *silent concerning him as an historical character!*

This is the most treacherous of all historical facts. This one incident, more than any other, casts serious doubt on the historical verity of Jesus.

The silence of no other contemporary could be so significant. If the writings of Josephus fail to note the advent of Jesus, we can pass it over as the omission of envy and the inborn prejudice of the Pharisees. If Tacitus, Livy, and all other profane writers were silent, the fact might be attributed to

ignorance or want of familiarity with the history of a people so unlike the Romans, a people whom the ancient "gentile" world never seemed to appreciate.

But with Philo the situation is exactly opposite. All his life, his meditations, his aspirations, and his philosophy would have compelled him to throw himself at the feet of Jesus—the manifest Paraclete—if he had met with or heard of Him.

How gladly would this devout and learned Jew have accepted the actual personification of his own ideas in his long-dreamed-of hope—his divine and unique philosophy—had their incarnation been indubitably set before his eyes! Had the Incarnate convinced him of His sincerity and reality, there could have been no excuse for Philo to have rejected Him. For He would have exemplified the very principles Philo was enunciating, and the event would have redounded to Philo's individual glory by exalting his idealistic and abstract philosophy into a realistic, human event.

But Philo is silent, notwithstanding that during the very period Jesus was stirring up commotion throughout all Palestine Philo visited Jerusalem, and could not but have heard of Him if He really existed.

Yet the casuists insist that the idea of Philo's Logos could not have been intended to refer to any historical appearance. But Philo's own words clearly refute the insinuation.

Of Jesus, his contemporary, Philo is silent. Nevertheless, some one hundred years later, at least, a Christian writer, assumed to be John of Patmos, prepares a narrative of this same Jesus,

and for the first time employs, with reference to this personage, the very terms, titles, and offices which the then silenced Philo had invented in describing his ideal Logos, whom he had never seen personified in the flesh. Surely, here is more than a mere coincidence; it is extremely suggestive of plagiarism.

It seems almost indisputable, as I have shown in my previous chapter on the Trinity, that the story of the Incarnation and the entire trinitarian theology originated in the Alexandrine school of Hellenic Jewish philosophy.

CHAPTER VIII

GOD MADE FLESH, OR THE MYTH OF HUMAN DEIFICATION (*Continued*)

AS dogmatic and single-eyed theology has ever missed the triumphant note of human inspiration in the eternally revealed truths of nature, so in its survey of the universal principle of the Incarnation it has at once maligned Deity and obfuscated humanity.

Unless we can discern a rational principle underlying this doctrine and secure by its promulgation some practical benefit to the race, it were better to abrogate it absolutely and turn to something more mundane. For we must not forget that the idea we are traversing is a universal principle—limited to no clime or place, to no race or religion.

Almost at the dawn of history, as we have seen, the vague notion of an incarnation seized the dull savage mind, nor has it since ceased to trouble and confuse the entire race.

It has ever been either confusion or inspiration to those who have studied its intimations.

The error of Christianism lay in its exclusive promulgation of a doctrine as *sui generis* which is but

borrowed from the general notions of the race. In the days of Jesus, among the Greeks, Romans, and Asiatics, the preaching of an incarnate Deity was not only not unpopular, but it was especially attractive to the populace.

Nothing so aroused the curiosity of the pagan crowd as the advertisement of the advent of a new god.

The gods were then supposed to be capable of encasing themselves in human flesh and mingling with the affairs of men.

In the Homeric legends we read how the gods and goddesses thus mingled with warriors on the battle-plains, so that it was quite difficult to trace the distinction between mortals and immortals.

The immortals take sides between the mortal contestants; they shield their *protégés* and pursue their enemies—they even suffer the shock of battle and groan with painful wounds inflicted by earthly warriors. For the slaying of a god was by no means a new conception at the time of the introduction of Christianity.

Diomed, shielded and inspired by Minerva, sought to slay Venus, whom, indeed, he smote through her " ambrosial veil " :

> " The sharp spear pierced her palm below the wrist;
> Forth from the wound the immortal current flowed,
> Pure ichor — life stream of the blessed gods."

Thus, wounded and horror-stricken, the goddess fled,

" Weeping with pain, her fair skin soiled with blood."

The visitations of the gods to earth—even clothed with human flesh—was, indeed, so commonplace as to call for no comment. Paul and Barnabas were acclaimed as gods by the ignorant rabble when they seemed to cure the crippled and diseased in their Asiatic wanderings.

"Immaculate conceptions and celestial descents were so currently received among the ancients that whoever had greatly distinguished himself in the affairs of men was thought to be of supernatural lineage. Gods descended from heaven and were made incarnate in men, and men ascended from earth and took their seats among the gods, so that these incarnations and apotheoses were fast filling Olympus with divinities." [1]

The especial characteristic of the incarnation of Jesus, however, as emphasized in Christian theology, consists in the fact of his being the full and complete manifestation of the Deity, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Paul: Col. ii. 9).

It has often been insisted that this unique and complete incarnation of Deity in Jesus is the characteristic of the Christian religion, which especially glorifies it, certifies to the genuineness of its divine origin, and establishes its superiority and incontestable authority over all the other religions of the world. But, unfortunately, this convincing characteristic was a marked feature of many of the pagan or ethnic religions, and in the theologic systems of some of them—such as those of Hindustan—it was exalted into as much importance as in the Christian religion.

[1] Doane, *Bible Myths*, p. 112.

Thus Thomas Maurice[1] says:

"It appears to me that the Hindus, idolizing some eminent character of antiquity, distinguished in the early annals of their nation by heroic fortitude and exalted piety, have applied to that character those ancient traditional accounts of an *incarnate God*, or, as they not improperly term it, an *Avatar*, which has been delivered down to them from their ancestors, the virtuous Noachidæ, to descend amidst the darkness and ignorance of succeeding ages, at once to instruct and inform mankind. We have the more solid reasons to affirm this of the Avatar of Krishna, because it is allowed to be the most illustrious of them all, since we have learned that in the seven preceding Avatars [incarnations], the Deity brought only an *ansa*, or portion of his divinity, but in the eighth he descended in *all the plenitude of the Godhead and was Vishnu himself in human form.*"

In other words, as in the Christian theological system Jesus is represented as manifesting the fulness of the invisible Deity bodily, so in the Hindu system Krishna stands as the full and last manifestation of Vishnu, the Supreme Deity, in human form. Krishna, therefore, performs in Hindu theology the identical office which Jesus does in the Christian system.

I need not here review the facts which prove that every religion of antiquity was founded on the myth of the miraculous birth of an incarnate deity, whose advent on the earth was accompanied, in almost every particular, by the very phenomena which

[1] *History of Hindustan*, vol. ii., p. 270.

gathered in legend around the manger-cradle of Jesus.

Even the very title of the Christian Jesus was given to some of the pagan gods incarnate. M. L'Abbé Huc, the French missionary, says[1]:

"This idea of redemption by divine incarnation is so general and popular among the Buddhists that, during our travels in upper Asia, we everywhere found it expressed in a neat formula. If we addressed to a Mongol or a Thibetan the question, 'Who is Buddha?' he would immediately reply, 'The Savior of Men.'"

Enough has been said to show that the conception of the Incarnation is universal — existing from most primitive times among all peoples and all religions. It suggests a cosmic fact which has been potent in forwarding the progress of the race.

Even at this hour, learned anthropologists are digging up from the very beginnings of human history corroborative proofs of the exaltation of human beings into the conception of heavenly deities. Egypt—the land of gods and mysteries — is even now drawing aside the veil of ignorance which for so many centuries has blinded the perception and confounded the understanding of men, and is revealing to us her most sacred deities as mere human beings who lived and fought and died as have the common inhabitants of this planet.

The startling exhumations which have been achieved by M. Amelineau at Ul Uxor have completely revolutionized the age-long notions which scholars have entertained concerning those strange

[1] *Huc's Travels*, vol. i., p. 327.

Egyptian gods—Isis, Osiris, Set, and Horus. Scholarship had heretofore exhausted its ingenuity to account for the origin of those far-off, mysterious deities, and had reached the comfortable conclusion that they were myths born out of the effects of sun, moon, and stars in human experience.

Thus Prof. George Rawlinson [1] says of one of the most mysterious of the Egyptian gods, Ammon, that the title was etymologically interpreted as "the concealed god, and the idea of Ammon was that of a recondite, incomprehensible divinity, remote from man, hidden, mysterious, the proper object of the profoundest reverence. Practically, this idea was too abstract, too high-flown, too metaphysical for ordinary minds to conceive of it; and so Ammon was at an early date conjoined with Ra, the Sun, and worshipped as Ammon-Ra, a very intelligible god, neither more nor less than the physical sun, the source of life and light, 'the lord of existences and the support of all things.'" Again in similar strain he says: "Osiris was properly a form of Ra. He was the light of the lower world—the sun from the time that he sinks below the horizon in the west to the hour when he reappears above the eastern horizon in the morning."

Thus are all the gods of Egypt resolved into purely mythical characters evolved out of human experiences resulting from the beneficent effects of the solar orbs, all thought of their ever having been realities having long since been banished by all well-informed scholars. The "solar myth" theory has been the universal method of accounting

[1] *The Religions of the Ancient World* (Humboldt ed.), p. 4.

for all the ancient gods of Egypt, India, Chaldea, and even Palestine.

"Certain scholars, notably G. W. Cox, and Professor de Gubernatis, as interpreters of the myths of the Indo-European peoples, and Dr. Goldziher, as an interpreter of Hebrew myth and cognate forms, maintain that the names given in the mythopœic age to the sun, the moon, and the changing scenery of the heaven, as the myriad shades and fleeting forms passed over its face, lost their original signification wholly or partially, and came to be regarded as the names of veritable deities and men, whose actions and adventures are the distinguished descriptions of the sweep of the thunder-charged clouds, and of the victory of the hero-god over their light-engulfing forces." [1]

But now comes M. Amelineau and seems to prove that these ancient deities are not mere myths, much less creations of the mind depicting the varying effects of sun and sky, but were in reality human beings who had been exalted into divinities. Thus at the very threshhold of history, fully ten thousand years ago, we perceive the notion of the Incarnation prevailing as a religious factor. In the exaltation of these men and women into divinities we learn how slight the line of demarcation between the divine and the human was conceived to be in the mind of the ancients. If men could be deified, gods could be humanized; thus was developed the interchange of conditions and attitudes of the great souls of antiquity from heaven to earth, from deity to man.

[1] Clodd, *The Birth and Growth of Myth* (Humboldt ed.), p. 8.

If M. Amelineau's exhumations are verified, then we shall no longer think of these far-off gods as mysterious and incomprehensible beings or as wandering images of a "mythopœic age," but as real men and women who were born, lived, fought, suffered, were married, became exalted, died, and were buried. We shall then once more seek to discover the real activities and careers of these supposed mythical characters, and instead of deciphering their imaginary deeds in the processes of the stars, the shades of the heavens, or the flitting transformations of the clouds, we will dig deeper into the long-buried annals of time and read, if possible, in the resurrected and imperishable monuments, the story of their elevation from humble cowherds to kings, and from kings to gods, and thereby learn that fiction may be stranger than the truth itself.

If M. Amelineau's conclusions are correct, they will materially assist us in clarifying the atmosphere, which has been so thickened by the "incomprehensible and the unintelligible" with which a pompous and authoritive ecclesiasticism has long surrounded us.

For we shall, at the very threshhold of human civilization, learn how men created their gods and how we have ever since imitated their methods in the gods whom we have worshipped. If it is unnecessary to call in the sun, moon, and stars to account for Isis and Osiris, Horus and Ammon-Ra, it will indicate to us the needlessness of calling in the Jehovistic qualities of the theological heavens to account for Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God.

For the indications of the later scholarship now are that we shall learn that Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Apollo, Mercury, and Venus were all, at one time, really men and women, and that, having lost their human histories, we have left only the legendary tales of their divine deeds.

And, following the same method of investigation, scholarship will at length doubtless prove to us that Jesus Christ was indeed a human being like unto all other earthly creatures, but that we have left in our possession chiefly the legends out of which were constructed the myth of his divinity and incarnation, whereas his human history is almost wholly obliterated.

I think, then, we shall be forced to reach the conclusion that the conception of the Incarnation among Christians was of a similar origin to that of the notion of incarnations among all religious people.

It grew first out of the desire of the race to exalt and glorify its leaders. The mass of men are so commonplace, that when, forsooth, one flits across the heavens of such majestic proportions and royal grandeur as to command the attention and awe of the multitude, they are loath to lower him again to their own humble plane, and insist on his remaining in the heavens among the unapproachable gods. Anon such mortals, whose visitations to this planet were so infrequent and spasmodic, were conceived as springing not from the earth, as arose all human flesh, but as descending from the skies, out of the realms of the invisible, carrying in their bosoms talismans of unparalleled virtue, conquering the

elements, subduing mortals, and triumphing over death.

But the absorption of this ethnic and popular notion into a single theology, whereby it has been made to appear that once only in human history did the infinite Deity incarnate and reveal Himself in human flesh, has given rise to insoluble problems and to an interminable mass of absurdities.

Mountains of literature have been published in the last eighteen centuries to prove this impossible proposition, and even to-day there are myriads of benighted souls who still entertain the reverend falsehood with devout tenacity.

Now, to realize into what a tangled mass of confusion the theological notion of the Incarnation threw the entire Christian world, I will quote a passage from M. Larroque,[1] a logical Deist, who seeks to disprove the logic of the doctrine of the Incarnation: "If Jesus Christ is not God, it is clear that God was not incarnate in his person. Hence it is unnecessary to insist at length on what is impossible and contradictory, viz., that the infinite and perfect essence should be circumscribed and limited in a finite and imperfect essence; in other terms that the Divinity should be added to the humanity—or, if the expression be preferred, the humanity should be added to the Divinity; or that the same being should be, at the same time, God and man. From the point of view of the dogma of the Incarnation, Christ, as God, is an infinite and perfect spirit; but as man, veritable and complete, he is made of soul

[1] Patrice Larroque, *Examen critique des doctrines de la Religion Chrétienne*. Quoted by Baring-Gould in *Origin of Religious Beliefs*.

and body, finite and imperfect as is everything belonging to our nature. Consequently theology is led to sustain that the human soul of Christ does not comprehend God any better than we do. It follows, that in spite of the intimate union, of the two natures, and, on the other side, for the very reason of that union, there is at once, in the same person, two beings, one of whom does not know the other, and in the same individual two distinct personalities, which is downright nonsense."

Now, to this apparently clear and conclusive logic Baring-Gould [1] seeks to present a metaphysical and pseudo-scientific answer in defence of the logical basis of the dogma of the Incarnation. He says: "This objection rests on the assumption that the finite and the infinite mutually exclude each other, and that therefore their synthesis is impossible."

He then proceeds to argue that time and space are not entities and not qualities of the Absolute. "It is, perhaps, natural that those who have to struggle incessantly with space and time should deceive themselves as to its nature, and erect what are mere relations into positive existences." "To the Absolute there is no past, no present, no future, or past and future are at once present." "It is not absurd to say . . . that God, in Himself, outside of time and space, should, when entering into relation with man, become subject to those relations, without which He would be incognizable by man." "In Him how many ideas are there? But one—for there is in Him but one eternal fact. But this idea necessarily contains all possibilities. It

[1] *Origin of Religious Beliefs*, vol. ii., p. 118 *ff*.

contains, therefore, the idea of the finite. . . . Thus the idea of God contains eternally the infinite and the finite; the infinite as essence, and the finite as fact."

This is the logical method which this modern "schoolman" employs to overthrow the clean-cut logic of unbiased reason. It sounds like an echo of the Middle Ages, and reveals to us what a jumble of mere words constitute the theological methods of argumentation.

But note the inconsistencies and impossibilities he enumerates in these few sentences in order to maintain the unutterably absurd theological dogma of the Incarnation. The Absolute is a Being in whom there is no past, no present, no future. In short, One who holds no relations whatsoever with the manifest cosmos. If He holds no relations with the cosmos, then the cosmos cannot sustain any relations with Him.

But two quantities which are incapable of sustaining any mutual relations are, as to each other, non-existent. Hence to the cosmos, or the universe of relations, the unrelated or the Absolute has no existence.

Again, he says that God, though outside of time and space, should, when entering into relations with man, become subject to those relations.

But if the Absolute, the unrelated, assume relation to the related, then he ceases to be the unrelated or the Absolute. For he cannot be the Absolute and the limited, the unrelated and the related, at one and the same time. A contradiction of terms is impossible in reason.

Again, he says that the Infinite has but one idea —but in that idea are included all possibilities. But a better and truer statement would be that the Absolute has no ideas or idea. For an idea is a thought; a thought is a process of thinking; thinking is a comparison of relations. But the unrelated can have no idea of relations—for, if he thinks relation, he must himself be related. In the same manner, to say the one idea of the infinite encompasses the idea of the finite is to say that the infinite must limit itself to the notion of the finite, else it could not comprehend the finite. The circumference can never be or become the arc. While the arc is ever contained in the circumference, by no process of thought can we conceive that the circumference can be wholly contained in the arc. The circumference can, therefore, never conceive of the existence of the arc, for to do so it must become the arc.

I have pursued the dismal nonsense of this logic simply to show the reader to what ridiculous straits a learned and modern philosopher will allow himself to be driven in battling for an effete and unsupportable dogma of antiquity.

Therefore I conclude that the Christian dogma of the Incarnation cannot be demonstrated by history, logic, or metaphysics. That one human individual alone has been the incarnation of Deity,—the manifest fulness of the Godhead bodily,—while all the rest of the race have been unaffected by this indwelling power, is incredible. If one human being is incarnate, all are incarnate.

If incarnation be a fact in nature, then it must be

universal. Does the experience of the race suggest this universal fact ? How, then, shall we conceive of incarnation ?

It is the bodying forth in physical manifestation of the invisible Spirit of the universe. If this Spirit be interpreted as individual, it is conceivable that such a limited spirit might be contained within a limited physical organism.

But this construction of the dogma would at once reduce the supreme and infinite Spirit to the confines of physical limitations and convert Him into a personal quantity, subject to all "variableness and shadow of turning."

If there be any incarnation of the Spirit, it must be enjoyed by the whole race — nay, not only by the race, but by the manifest universe, which is, itself, but the outward body functioning the activities which are energized by the universal Spirit within.

Any other interpretation of the Incarnation becomes unphilosophical and contradictory of the first principles of nature. For, if Spirit can be contained only in one, or in a few individuals, but not in every member of the race, then they possess qualities which are wholly foreign to the rest of their fellow-creatures. But such unique endowments would be extra-natural and in effect miraculous. Nature cannot entertain a miracle. All is Law, Order, Unfoldment. If, then, there have been certain individuals who in history have manifested powers which appear to be above the common capacities of the race, such qualifications can be nothing more than a higher development of

certain capacities which are latent or but partially developed in the bosom of every human being.

In this sense Jesus, Buddha, Quetzalcohuatl, were no more God—in kind—than any other human inhabitant of the planet. Their differentiation is alone in degree. They but possessed more of the universal Spirit which abounds in all things and persons than did the ordinary individuals of the race.

This interpretation of the Incarnation, instead of demeaning the great World-Avatars, really exalts them, while it at once prophesies higher possible attainments for all mankind.

We are all incarnate children of Deity. Deity is the all-pervasive presence of Being—the principle of Life and Growth—which sustains the visible and invisible universe. Each atom is an incarnate spirit. Every globule of water, and the Titanian motes that dance in the sunbeam, are incarnations of the all-diffusive Spirit.

All are but emanations of the universal Luminosity, whose radiance is refracted through them, as the light of the sun breaking through a bank of clouds. The atom contains less of this spiritual potency than a star only because its undeveloped organism makes its receptive capacity the less.

For the same reason there is less of the universal spirit of intelligence and power in the uncrystallized rock than there is in the resplendent diamond—less in lifeless diamond than in throbbing amœba—and less in any of the vertebrates than in man—"infinite in faculty, in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!"

CHAPTER IX

THE DEFEAT OF DEATH, OR THE STRANGE STORY OF THE RESURRECTION

THE dream of immortality has been variously colored, according to the times and conditions of the race. In the dimmest past the vague notion of an after-life floated through the dull brain of the savage as fleecy clouds, besprent with light, float distantly athwart the morning sky.

To live again when the breath had vanished, to see with eyeless sockets and feel with nerveless fingers, somehow, although inexplicably, the primitive wanderer of the plains vaguely expected. The instinct of life was all he knew. The consciousness of death was beyond the pale of his experience. But life was so full of joy, of boundless hope, of morning light and splendid promise, that he could not permit the gloomy thought to seize his mind that ever " in cold obstruction " he would " lie and rot," and " this sensible, warm motion become a kneaded clod."

He observed death, but he never experienced it. He beheld the glories of nature fade, the shimmering greenery of the spring sink into the " sear and

yellow leaf"; the bright-winged butterfly tarnish and depart; the myriad insects of the air, the grazing cattle, and the furious forest beasts, one by one, fall in death and dissolve into the elements; he beheld his warrior companions, felled on the field of battle, yield the heart's "red badge" of heroism to the final conqueror; he saw his consort of the fireside, who bore his offspring and oft followed him on the hunting-ground or amid the gory deeds of war, sink into wakeless sleep upon his heaving bosom; all this he grimly saw, and pondered; but death itself he could not comprehend, for as yet he had not experienced it, and to him, therefore, its realization was an impossibility.

Hope, however, he could find in the promises and prophecies of nature. He saw the glory of the spring return; the frozen bonds of winter loosen; the frigid brooks break their silence and begin their murmuring music; the rains descend and fructify the earth; the selfsame bush, on which but yesterday the faded rose lay dead and drooping, once more burst forth with variegated life, and spread at his feet its smiling mantle of beauty; he beheld the arid plains reclad with emerald robes and studded with a thousand gems; he saw the grazing cattle return as from the dead and once more thrive upon the living heaths; he saw young warriors spring, as it were, from the loins of their departed ancestors, clothed with the same heroic valor and athletic prowess; he saw even the ancestral features reproduced in the dauntless young, and the selfsame natural leadership on hunting-ground and battle-field. He felt once again within his arms the same

squaw who but yesterday he laid away in the ground; for if the substitute were not herself she bore such verisimilitude, in form and feature, in obedience and devotion, that he could not but persuade himself it must indeed be she, revisiting him from the grave.

The mind of the savage, simple as that of the child, is easily affected by every varying event, and swiftly oblivious of past experiences.

Hence, why should he not dream that death, somehow, is but an apparition—a grim hallucination of the brain, the hideous vision of which harrows the soul, and from whose repulsive forebodings the living present alone restores him?

Hence, whatever else death may have been, it was not a reality, a finale, a consummation. Life was the permanent, persistent, present fact. Death was but a shadow, a phantom, an insubstantial figment of the brain. He could not solve the mystery. He could but gaze, with dull eye and vague impression, on the gloomy passing of departed friends. But Life was his counsellor and companion, his guide and inspirer, and beyond life he would not seek to penetrate.

Thus, in some shadowy manner, the dream of the after-life floated through the misty minds of the first-born sons of the earth, who basked in the hazy horizon of the far-off beginnings of historic time.

We shall never know exactly how man began first to contemplate the life after death, but we have sufficient data to enable us to conjecture with plausible accuracy. Tyler[1] gives of the origin and

[1] *Anthropology*, pp. 343–345.

growth of the primitive notions of life and death a rapid and concise sketch which will repay repeating here:

"What, then, is the soul or life which thus comes and goes in sleep, trance, and death? To the rude philosopher the question seems to be answered by the very evidence of his senses. When the sleeper awakens from a dream he believes he has really, somehow, been away, or that other people have come to him. Even waking men in broad daylight sometimes see these human phantoms in what are called visions or hallucinations. They are further led to believe that the soul does not die with the body, but lives on after quitting it, for, although a man may be dead and buried, his phantom-figure continues to appear to his survivors in dreams and visions. . . . Here, then, in a few words is the savage and barbaric theory of soul, where life, mind, breath, shadow, reflection, dream, vision, come together and account for one another in some such vague, confused way as satisfies the untaught reason. The Zulu will say that at death a man's shadow departs from his body and becomes an ancestral ghost, and the widow will relate how her husband has come in her sleep and threatened to kill her for not taking care of her children; or the son will describe how his father's ghost stood before him in a dream, and the souls of the two, the living and the dead, went off together to visit some far-off kraal of their people. The Malays do not like to wake a sleeper lest they should hurt him by disturbing his body while his soul is out. The Nicaraguans, when questioned by the Spaniards, said

that when a man or woman dies there comes out of their mouth something that resembles the person and does not die, but the body remains here—it is not precisely the heart that goes above, but the breath that comes from their mouth, and is called the life. . . . The Greenlanders reckoned man as having two souls, his shadow and his breath; and the Fijians said that the 'dark spirit' or shadow goes down to the world below, but the light spirit, or reflection seen in the water, stays near where he dies."

Out of such simple beginnings arose all the doctrines, theories, and systems of faith which afterward overshadowed and benighted the civilized world. From such psychological origin gradually arose the monstrous superstructure of superstition, which for centuries overawed and begloomed the intellect of man.

The interest, to us, in tracing the historic and psychological origin of religious dogmas lies in the fact that thus we are able to prove the humaness of all religions, their natural inception and probable future. As we have sought to explain all the other doctrines of Christianity in this manner, we shall try to show that the dogma of the Resurrection, both that attributed to Jesus and that prophesied of all human beings, had a similar origin, and by tracing its development we may be able to understand its rationale and extract from it the grain of spiritual truth which it contains.

In one form or other the doctrine of the Resurrection has existed in all religions, however primitive or progressive, and in all these religions

it has been intimately associated with the return of the glad springtime, after the dark and long-dreaded days of winter.

Rise! my Soul, uplift thy wings
Above thy prison clay.
Rise! a sylvan zephyr brings
The breath of vernal day.
Glorious orbs of heaven are bright,
Encircled in deep blue,
Birds and flowers hail the light
Of Springtime's golden hue.

This fact would seem to indicate that the Feast of the Resurrection had its origin in the primitive agricultural period of society, when men were addicted to scrutinous observations of the seasons, and were constantly dependent upon the bounteousness of the soil, responsive to the return of milder atmospheres and warmer suns. What, then, more natural than that there should be a great time of rejoicing amid the ascent of vocal hosannas when the long and golden days began to prophesy their advent by the renewed music of the rivulets, the song of birds, and the bursting of flowers? When the soil responded to the tiller's ploughing and sowing with baby blades of grass and smart young sprouts and budding boughs that foretold the yellow grain and blushing fruit and bursting barns, what wonder the orisons of those primitive worshippers made the welkin ring with the triumphs of nature's resurrection!

The anthropologist, therefore, manifestly pursues a logical trail in his search after the origin of

religious customs when he studies the legends, usages, and rites which centred around the advent of spring; for here especially he discerns the first intimations of the Feast of the Resurrection.

Before we proceed we must recall to the reader's memory the fact that this feast is not at all peculiar to the Christian religion, but has been a characteristic of every religion whose history can be traced. The doctrine of the resurrection of a personal Saviour was the central secret of the teachings of the "ancient mysteries," and he was counted a true initiate who had acquired an understanding of the mystic interpretation involved in the ceremony. Just as in the Christian religion this doctrine is considered final and supreme—the foundation on which the entire superstructure is reared—without which, indeed, the Christian religion would be deprived of its claim to a supernatural origin—so, likewise, in all the ancient mysteries it was the culminating and supreme doctrine, to the full appreciation and application of whose occult purport the novitiate consecrated his whole life.

Around the "mysteries" an air of the utmost secrecy was rigidly maintained in all the religions of the East. "It was, perhaps, when this doctrine [of the future life] crept into the Eleusinia that the strict oath of secrecy was instituted. On the first day of the ceremonies the sacred herald by public proclamation enjoined silence and reverence on the initiated. . . . Wherefore, Demosthenes says that those who have not been initiated can know nothing of the mysteries by report." [1]

[1] Keary, *Primitive Belief*, p. 246.

We read a similar injunction to mysterious secrecy in the writings of St. Paul. He exclaims: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified of the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." [1] Once more, with evident intimation of the essential mystery to be attached to his doctrine, he says: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery — the *hidden* wisdom," etc.[2] And still again, there is even a deeper tinge of obscure intimation in this outcry: "Behold I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . . the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." [3]

Manifestly, in these expressions but one supreme mystery is intimated, and that the very essence of the religion which Paul is proclaiming, namely, the Resurrection of the Savior and of mortals redeemed by his sacrifice. "Christ and the Resurrection" was Paul's persistent battle-cry—his one great preachment.

In perfect accord with the sense of mystery attached to this specific doctrine, the early Christian converts assembled in secret conclaves, fearing lest the barbarous and unregenerate world should obtrude itself upon their solemn and sacred devotions. It is commonly supposed that the early Christians were driven to underground assemblies because of the political persecutions which harassed them. But this is an error. Long before these persecutions

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 7.

[3] 1 Cor. xv. 51 *ff.*

annoyed them they resorted to these mysterious, secret assemblies. This fact alone will assist us materially in discovering the intimate relation that existed between this solemn secret of the Christian religion and the unnameable mysteries of the ancient religions. We shall learn that in all these religions alike the mystery centred around the unspeakable resurrection of a Savior from the grave.

Gibbon[1] gives positive evidence that the first gatherings of the Christian converts were mysteriously secret assemblies, which, in consequence, led to their ultimate persecution on purely legal and apparently legitimate grounds. The Romans permitted secret meetings to prevail among the followers of their own religion, and such foreign religions as became incorporated in their system, only because the priests were officials of the government, and conducted the "mysteries" for the supposed defence and integrity of the nation.

But Gibbon[2] says: "The personal guilt which every Christian had contracted, in thus preferring his private sentiment to the national religion, was aggravated in a very high degree by the number and union of the criminals. It is well known that Roman policy viewed with the utmost jealousy and distrust any association among its subjects; and that the privileges of private corporations, though formed for the most harmless or beneficial purposes, were bestowed with a very sparing hand. The religious assemblies of the Christians who had separated themselves from the public worship, appeared of much less innocent nature; they were illegal

[1] *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii., pp. 9, 10. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., pp. 9, 10.

in their principle, and in their consequences might become dangerous; nor were the emperors conscious that they violated the laws of justice, when for the peace of society they prohibited those secret and sometimes nocturnal meetings."

From this observation of Gibbon we learn that the meetings of the Christians were secret long before the public persecutions were instituted. Why, then, did the early Christians meet in subterranean conclaves and appall the world with their austere and sinister visages? "Their gloomy and austere aspect, their abhorrence of the common business and pleasures of life, and their frequent prediction of impending calamities," says Gibbon, "inspired the pagans with the apprehension of some impending danger, which would arise from the new sect, the more alarming as it was the more obscure."

In this connection we must remember that the conception of immediate resurrection, and the final ending of the world, was universally taught and believed by all the early converts. Expecting that their Savior would soon return, and that his disciples would all be caught up as in a cloud and there meet him, caused them, of course, to disregard the "common business and pleasures of life" in preparation for the triumphant finale of human existence.

At this juncture it behooves us to study the ceremonies and characteristics of the so-called "mysteries" of the ancient religions, that we may learn whether teachings similar to those of Paul were associated with them, in regard to the theory of the Resurrection.

Even in the earliest days the pagan opponents of the Christians charged that their secret meetings were immoral and of a similarly degrading nature with those to which their own cult had fallen.

"The primitive Church[1] carefully guarded the celebration of the Eucharist from the pryings of idle curiosity or the perfidy of heathen malevolence, lest the name of God should be blasphemed, or the godly pearl of salvation be trampled beneath swinish feet. But this very secrecy and mystery became the occasion of the vilest slanders and aspersions. The Christians were accused of celebrating these rites with the most abominable orgies—feasting on human flesh and infants' blood, and committing nameless crimes of still deeper dye.

"'They charge us,' say the martyrs of Lyons, 'with feasts of Thyestes, and the crimes of Œdipus, and such abominations as are neither lawful for us to speak nor think.' The blameless believers were denounced as the very dregs of society, a skulking and darkness-loving race, meeting by night for profane conjuration and unhallowed banquets, as despisers of the gods, haters of mankind, and mockers of holy things, and were confounded with pestilent sorcerers who in midnight caves practised their foul incantations against human life. These accusations were partly, it is probable, from distorted accounts of the holy communion of the body and the blood of Christ, interpreted as a literal partaking of the corporeal substance; partly from the vile practices of the Carpocratians and other heretics; but chiefly from the malice of the heathen themselves, judging

[1] Withrow, *The Catacombs of Rome*, pp. 548, 549.

the character of the Christian mysteries from the obscene orgies of Venus and Bacchus."

But the very fact that the meetings of the early Christians—especially their Love-feast, or "Agape," and the Lord's Supper—became so degraded as to call for the rebuke of Paul[1] and the Apostles, and that the "Agape" was finally abolished because of the public scandal which it occasioned, hints at the probable existence among the primitive Christians of such immoralities as caused the heathen justly to suspect that they were similar to the practices of their own temples.

The fact that they maintained such severe secrecy; that these strange meetings were celebrated "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife"; that they endured all manner of abuse and persecution even unto martyrdom rather than reveal the sacred customs or even the nature of the food and drink of which they partook in their celebrations; these conditions naturally led the curious pagan to imagine that they durst not reveal their proceedings lest the participants be prosecuted because of their immoralities. "Gathering by stealth in these subterranean crypts, from the imperial palace and the abode of lowly poverty, they break bread together in the solemn presence of the dead in token of their common brotherhood in Christ."[2]

If one will in this connection read in the Epistle of Peter the severe castigation which he gives to his followers because of their abuse of the sacred privileges of the holy meetings he will discover still more

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 27–34.
[2] Withrow, *Catacombs*.

evidence of the justifiable basis for the charges of the "heathen."[1]

But why all this intense secrecy; why this overweening show of mystery; why these subterranean gatherings, and these darkly guarded conclaves mantled by the gloom of night? One would think that there must be some startling fact which they are seeking to guard; some profound and mystical truth which they would safeguard against the abuse and desecration of the uninitiated masses. These meetings not being for purposes of safety before the persecutions began, their cause must be profounder and more mysterious than that for which their apologists contend. Did not some amazing revelation come to them through unwonted channels, some revelation which so dazzled and overwhelmed them that they durst not even hint its meaning to the world of scoffers and disbelievers? Did not they assemble to honor and celebrate that very phenomenon which had been similarly distinguished in the ancient religions when the initiated received the key to the inexplicable Mystery? Could not the following words of Keary refer equally to the curiously shrouded gatherings of the pristine Christians as to the Eleusinia and other pagan assemblies, in regard to which they were actually penned?

"One would like to know what ideas the initiated had concerning that future for which they were in some unknown way preparing themselves. I should not think it strange if in the height of their mystic rites, in the midst of blazing torches, of the sounds of music, of wild cries to Dionysus, in the gloom of

[1] 2 Peter ii. 10–22.

night, among sacrifices and the memories of friends not long since departed, the enthusiast became transported to think that he was no longer in the upper work-a-day world, but had really been carried across the dreaded Styx to the asphodel meadows and the banks of the forgetful stream. In the Middle Ages, during the fever of those darker mystic rites, which used at times to sweep over the people like an epidemic, and which culminated during the fourteenth century in the horrible *Dance of Death*, it was common enough to find the performers fully persuaded that they had passed the limits of mortality." [1]

Now, in all ages this conception of the spiritual ascendency of the initiate was associated with the dream of the resurrection of the Savior, in imitation of whose ascension the disciple attained supernatural powers. It is manifest, therefore, that it was because of the inauguration of this mystic conception in the Judæo-Christian religion, under the leadership of that most mystical of men, St. Paul, that the new worship had become secret and the gatherings subterranean, in order that the world might not be cognizant of the performances which could be so easily misinterpreted.

In the worship of the ancient mysteries, as well as in the exercises of the early Christians, there was evidently an ambition to attain some unusual spiritual exaltation, some ecstatic consummation of the worshipful attitude, that would elevate the human consciousness above its mundane environment and

[1] Keary, *Outlines of Primitive Beliefs*, pp. 247, 248; *ibid.*, chapter v.

draw around the soul the magic circle of the Divine Presence. This was the Mystery that was so safely guarded and which was revealed only to the initiated.[1]

It was the effort of the devotee to visually dramatize the story of the Resurrection and to attain its realization in a moment of supreme ecstasy.

Certain transporting scenes were portrayed on the enraptured vision of the candidate,—visions of the gods, of spiritual giants, or unearthly powers, whose magic presence overawed the neophyte and silenced him into speechless adoration. Vague and fantastic images floated before his astonished eyes, presenting scenes of transcendent wonderment and beauty —thaumaturgic beings displayed miraculous powers, and the curtain of the heavens seemed to draw aside and lay bare the secret of their manifold mysteries. Gods became as men, walked upon the earth, sat beside their disciples and communed with them in the vernacular of the day; matter dissolved into etheral nothingness, ghostlike figures of men and animals evolved out of the atmosphere in the dusk, acted like natural beings, conversed with their astounded observers, or served them with devout obedience. The ordinary world was obliterated—the world of mountains, woods, valleys, and rivers, of cities and peoples, temples and market places—all these vanished from the consciousness of the

[1] "The mystæ now repeated the oath of secrecy which had been administered to them at the lesser Eleusinia, underwent a new purification, and then they were led by the mystagogues, *in the darkness of the night*, into the lighted interior of the sanctuary, and were allowed to see what none except the epoptæ had ever beheld."—Anthon, *Antiquities*, p. 396.

transported neophyte, who was really gazing into the invisible world, which is forever shut from the view of the vulgar and uninitiated.

In like manner the ceremony of the Eucharist has in all ages been associated with the spirit of obscurantism, with an air of solemn awfulness and prophetic pathos, which, as we shall soon see, reminds us in its disciplinary effects of the similar customs in the ancient mysteries.

It is, therefore, necessary that we analyze these mysteries—reduce them to their simplest elements, and, above all things, seek to trace their origin and historical development. In the first place, we are struck by the close resemblance between the usages in the worship of these mysteries and the Christian rites. The latter were distinguished by the same descriptive or suggestive titles as the former.

Says Mosheim, the greatest of orthodox Church historians[1]: "The primitive Christians gave the name of 'mysteries' to the institutions of the Gospels, and decorated particularly the *holy sacrament* with that title; they used the very terms employed in the heathen mysteries, and adopted some of the rites and ceremonies of which those renowned mysteries consisted. . . . A great part of the service of the Church in this century (the second), had a certain air of heathen mysteries, and resembled them in many particulars."

The hint is here clearly given that the Christian "mysteries" relating to the Savior, the nature of the human soul, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection had their origin in pagan ceremonies of extreme

[1] Vol. i., p. 204, quoted in Taylor, *Diegesis*, p. 212.

antiquity, and not in the life and career of Jesus Christ. This hint is of sufficient importance to warrant further investigation.

First let us apprehend precisely what was the chief end in view in the mind of the neophyte seeking initiation into the ancient mysteries. In order to be strictly conservative in this research I will quote from an orthodox Christian authority:

"It was undoubtedly one chief aim of the mysteries (Eleusinia) to spread among the educated classes of the people more elevated religious ideas than were held by the masses, especially with regard to the immortality of the soul, the punishment of the wicked, and the rewards of the good. The initiated were supposed to be especially protected by the gods, and to be sure of the joys of the future life."[1]

One would, however, think, with Keary, if this were the entire substance of the knowledge which was imparted to the initiated, such extreme secrecy as was enjoined by the mystagogue, both on the neophyte and the mystæ, would be unnecessary. We learn, however, that this compulsory secrecy was a portion of the discipline, both of the ancient pagan and the Christian mysteries. Mosheim dwells with especial emphasis on this compulsory secrecy instituted for the catechumens of the early Church, and seeks to discover the necessity for it in the assumed mystical teachings of the initiated among the fathers of the Church.

Clement, who was one of the chief fathers, lays

[1] McClintock and Strong's *Encyclopædia of Biblical Knowledge*, art. "Eleusinian Mysteries."

great stress upon the secret discipline, and intimates that those who are fully initiated become the recipients of marvellous spiritual knowledge. He calls it "Gnosis," and intimates that it was instituted among the chosen ones of Christ's disciples by Jesus himself.

"What those maxims and principles were which Clement conceives himself precluded from communicating to the world at large, cannot long remain a secret to any diligent and attentive reader of his works. There cannot be the smallest question that they were philosophical explications of the Christian tenets concerning the Trinity, the soul, the world, the future resurrection of the body, Christ, the life to come, and other things of a like abstract nature, which had in them somewhat that admitted of being expounded upon philosophical principles. They also consisted, no doubt, in certain mystical and allegorical interpretations of the divine oracles, calculated to support those philosophical expositions of the Christian principles and tenets." [1]

That Clement himself, however, conceived them to be not merely philosophical speculations, but maxims of experience and divulgences of profound interior or esoteric penetration, is manifest in his injunctions to his confrères in secrecy when he exclaims: "Having, then, O ye initiated through the channel of purified organs, acquired a knowledge of these things, let them sink deep into your minds as holy mysteries, not to be revealed to the profane. Bury them within your bosoms, and preserve them as a treasure; a treasure consisting not of corruptible

[1] Mosheim, *History of Christianity*, vol. i., p. 376, 377.

things, such as gold and silver, but of the fairest and most valuable portion of true wealth, namely, a knowledge of God and virtue, and of the offspring that is generated of them both. Wherever you chance to meet with any one else of the initated beseech him with the most earnest entreaties not to conceal from you any mystery that he may have more recently discovered and leave him not until you shall have obtained from him the most intimate insight into it." [1]

Now, Mosheim scouts the idea that Christ was the sponsor of such teachings, and intimates that the conscience of Clement was not so sensitive but that he could without compunction fabricate a supernatural origin for a doctrine which he himself had been taught by the hierophants of a pagan faith. For he says: "The secret discipline was of a more comprehensive nature than the mystical theology, inasmuch as it embraced the whole of the philosophical theology that sprung up in Egypt in the second century and gradually found its way from there into other nations. . . . For it is well known that the true and genuine mysteries adopted as the very basis and groundwork of their discipline were those principles respecting the world, the Deity, the soul, and the nature of man which the Christians had borrowed from Egyptian and Platonic philosophy, and were accustomed from this century to communicate to a select number of auditors." [2]

We have thus pursued our investigation suffi-

[1] *History of Christianity*, p. 378.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 204; also quoted in Taylor, *Diegesis*, p. 212.

ciently to learn that the ceremony or mystery connected with the Resurrection (for we shall soon learn that the celebration of the Eucharist was very similar to that of the Eleusinian mysteries) was not originally or distinctively Christian, but was derived from a foreign source, and, therefore, necessarily devoid of a supernatural origin, from a Christian standpoint.

It now behooves us to study the institution of the Eucharist which celebrated the death and resurrection of Jesus, and observe whether we can trace any vestiges of this doctrine antecedent to his advent. If we can discover such vestiges, then it is manifest that the Eucharist was a borrowed institution and could not have related, primarily, to the culminating feature of the career of Jesus, save in adaptation or by way of illustration.

The material symbols of the Eucharist are wine and bread:—the fruit of the vine and the product of the grain; the grape, and wheat or corn. Here we are at once forced to observe the agricultural association of the feast, which will demonstrate a marked resemblance in origin with the pagan feasts of the mysteries. These mysteries had their origin in the celebration of agricultural periods: those seasons when young Nature is big with the promise of her myriad offspring, or bursting, in the hour of delivery, with the harvest fruits of autumn days. Whether or not, in the conclusion of our research, we shall be able to discover that the celebration of the Christian Eucharist, and hence the tradition of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, had an origin similar to that of the ancient mysteries, and,

therefore, that the mystical discipline of the early catachumens was an imitation of that of the Eleusinian temples, as intimated by Mosheim, we shall at least be forced to discern the identical nature of the ceremonial mysticism taught alike by pagan and Christian in the ancient days.

A merely casual observation of the celebration of the Christian Eucharist reminds us at the outset of certain heathen characteristics. What are the symbols of the Eucharist ? Bread and wine. Who were the two especial gods to whom the neophytes in the Eleusinia consecrated their lives? Ceres and Bacchus: the goddess of agriculture (celebrated in the gathering of the grain from which bread is produced), and the god of wine, the fruit of the harvest grape. The Eleusinian initiate actually drank the blood of Bacchus, and ate the body of Ceres. Here, in the most realistic sense, we discern the anticipation of that abstruse Christian dogma, source of such intemperate theological battles in the Middle Ages, the transubstantiation of the body of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament.

If we study the ceremonies of both these ancient institutions we shall discern further similar characteristics which intimate a similarity of origin. The inauguration of the neophyte into the mysteries of the pagan temple was preceded by certain sacred rites and symbolical procedures, the object of which was to divert the attention of the candidate for a time from the world, its pleasures and temptations, and to awaken in his breast a keen anticipation of the revelations which would soon be unfolded to his vision. This suggests the preparatory exercises

which are solemnly performed just before the Eucharist is celebrated and while the sacred wine and bread are being consecrated by the priest. The communicant is taught to set his thoughts on high and holy things, to strive for spiritual exaltation and absorbing ecstasy.

"Hungry and thirsty, faint and weak,
As Thou when here below,
Our souls the joys celestial seek,
Which from Thy sorrows flow."

No one was admitted into the mysteries except those who had resolved upon striving after a pure and ennobling life. The slave, the prostitute, the moral outcast, were deprived of the coveted privilege. (See Keary, *Outlines of Primitive Beliefs.*)

In like manner Paul enjoins that "whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily shall be guilty of the blood of the Lord." He warns those who are inwardly undeserving and unworthy to refrain lest they "drink damnation to themselves."

Here is an occult hint. Doubtless the mystic meaning of this Pauline expression was, not that the damnation of a future hell would befall them, but that the immoral and debauched use of the sacred privilege would result in the benighting of the offender's soul, plunging him into the depths of spiritual darkness and moral depletion.

Again, we should observe that the ceremony of the Lord's Supper is, of all the ceremonies of the Church, the most sorrowful and melancholy. It paints to the communicant's imagination with

realistic emphasis the mystic torture and death of humanity, especially as exemplified in the gory crucifixion of the Lord, and fastens upon his attention the gloomy fact that he is constantly approaching the advent of that last hour when he must seriously contemplate the profound problem of the future life.

We discover traces of the same spirit prevalent among the initiates in the ancient mysteries, especially after they had become tinged with the serious intrusions of the Egyptian philosophy.[1]

At this period we discover the childish simplicity of the Homeric legends deepening into the profounder anticipations of the later teachings. "All the stimulants to emotion which we have dwelt on before, the secrecy of the mystery, the tumultuous excitement of the orgy, were to be found within them; and in addition to these motives, they now added a new one, — a hint concerning the great mystery of mysteries, the mingling of death with life. . . . This had given to the ceremony a

[1] "Respecting the secret doctrines which were revealed to the initiated nothing certain is known. The general belief of the ancients was that they opened to man a comforting prospect of a future state. But this feature does not seem to have been originally connected with these mysteries, and was probably added to them at the period which followed the opening of a regular intercourse between Egypt and Greece, when some of the speculative doctrines of the former country and the East may have been introduced into the mysteries, and hallowed by the names of the venerable bards of the mystical age. . . . The doctrines taught in the mysteries were doubtless the remains of a worship which preceded the rise of the Hellenic mythology and its attendant rites, grounded on a view of nature less fanciful, more earnest, and better fitted to awaken both philosophical thought and religious feeling."—Anthon, *Dictionary of Antiquities*, art. "Eleusinia."

new character. It must have thrown over the festival a quite new air of sadness, which was very different from the emotion with which men looked upon the play [the Greek drama of Demeter and Persephone] which told only of the death of earth's greenery. The seeds which now were planted were the bodies of beloved relatives; they would not spring up again with the returning year. The mysteries entered upon a fresh phase. It was after this transition from the old to the new mysteries that art began to busy itself much with the story of the Great Goddess. . . . Demeter herself became more a picture of maternal sorrow than she should naturally have been. In some of the statues of Demeter—as for example in that beautiful one from Cnidus in the British Museum—we have an image of the true *Mater Dolorosa* of the Greek creed. It is evident that the mother mourns for her daughter as for one dead. Nevertheless the ultimate consolation of the goddess was suited to teach men that they need not sorrow as those that have no hope."[1]

We might multiply our citations of the apparent similarity between the customs and teachings of the ancient pagan mysteries and the Christian Eucharist, but perhaps we have already cited sufficient resemblances to establish a suspicion of their virtual identity.

St. Justin, in his *Apology*, describing the Christian institution, says: "And having taken the cup and returned thanks he said: 'This is my blood,' and delivered it unto them. *Which thing, indeed, the*

[1] Keary, *Outlines*, pp. 245, 246.

evil spirits have taught to be done out of mimicry in the Mysteries and the initiatory rites of Mithra."[1]

This intimation of St. Justin is, of course, absurd on its face, for the religion of the Persian Mithras was discovered by the Romans only as late as the year 70 A.D., when it had already been in existence for many centuries; indeed, it is one of the most primitive of all ancient cults.[2]

Manifestly the early Christians had been much taunted because of their claim to originality as to their ceremonials of faith and religious rites by their pagan opponents, who could successfully prove to them that these same ceremonials and precepts had been essential components of the pre-existing religions, many centuries before.

Indeed, it might easily have been shown by those early opponents of Christianity that its alleged original mysteries were so ancient their origin was lost in the very dawn of human thought, and merged in the nature-worship of the uncivilized primitives, who pursued the courses of the seasons with an eye of wonder, and built a thousand legends concerning the departure of the sun, after the battle of the day, in a chariot of blood and fire, and his resurrection in the golden splendors of the dawn.

[1] St. Justin's *Apology*, chapter lxvi., quoted in Doane, *Biblical Myths*, p. 308.

[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. "Mithras."

CHAPTER X

THE DEFEAT OF DEATH, OR THE STRANGE STORY OF THE RESURRECTION (*CONTINUED*)

WE have thus far minutely traced the historical origin of the Christian ceremony of the Lord's Supper, in order that we might push it back still farther, into the myth-age of the ancients, and thus show that its primary origin is traceable in the popular celebration of the seasons and the agricultural characteristics of the common people.[1]

Then we shall be able to discern the real origin of the doctrine and legend of the Resurrection in the suggestions of the springtime and the golden promises of the approaching season of sunshine, happiness, and harvest wealth. After we have traced the natural origin of these religious festivals (anciently called "mysteries"), and their associate doctrines, we shall be able to understand the evolution of the profounder esoteric or occult interpreta-

[1] "Whether the mysteries were, as at first, feasts to the spring, or, as later on they became, feasts to the goddess of agriculture, harvest homes, they were before all things, *peasant festivals*. They belonged to the autochthones, the simple early inhabitants of the soil. To that belonging they owed their vast antiquity."—Keary, *Outlines*, p. 231.

tion of these events, which gradually entered the consciousness of humanity as it developed higher stages of intelligence and spiritual appreciation.

We shall, perhaps, be led at once to the origin of the sublime mythos of the Christ, and the legend of the Resurrection, from their primal intimations in nature-worship, if we review the story of the maiden Persephone, in Grecian mythology, who wandered innocently from her native Nysian plain, to meet her interesting and pathetic experiences. With naïve enthusiasm she bounds along gathering the rose, and crocus, and fair violets, and the symbolic narcissus, in the bosom of whose petals lay grim Death asleep. But as the innocent maiden stooped to pluck this rare flower, from whose hundred blossoms the divine fragrance floated over "the laughing earth and the salt sea waves," the wide earth split in twain, and forth leaped the awful son of Kronos, who bore her away despite her frantic cries, in his golden chariot. None heard her cry among mortal men or the immortal gods.

"And her companions all vainly sought her,
Of gods or mortal men none heard her cry,
Saving two only, the great Perseus' daughter,
The goddess of the cave, mild Hekate,
And bright Hyperion's son, King Helios.
He, too, gave ear unto that call; for he
Taking from men their offerings bounteous,
In his own house sat from the gods away."

But one hears the cry whose heart beat in sympathy for the maiden's rescue — dame Demeter. Grief o'erwhelmes her. She rent her veil and en-

velopes her figure in her dark-blue cloak, and roames the wide world over seeking her lost daughter. She visits the abodes of all the gods and rends the welkin on high Olympus, crying for her loved one. At length King Zeus hears her groans and with her descends to Hades, the realm of stygian gloom, and demands the release of Persephone. With her glad mother, leaping for joy, they return to earth and fill the world with joy and cheer, beauty and delight.

It is manifest that this touching story, which constitutes one of the most fascinating of the Homeric hymns, is but a nature-myth, portraying the convulsion of the elements, and the purturbations of the world, after winter's surcease and the advent of the spring. Demeter is the mother-earth. Persephone is the daughter—the seed, the germ, the offspring of earth. The place to which Demeter and her daughter returned with Zeus from the gloom of Hades was said to be Eleusis, which means the coming. This was the original habitat of the Eleusinia, and clearly refers to the advent or " coming " of the spring.

Here, then, in dramatic form we discern the mystical celebration of that golden period of nature when, tearing herself from the frigid heart of winter, she bursts the bonds of sorrow and captivity, thrilled with a thousand joys and resonant with ten thousand songs of victory.

Now, the fact that the original Eleusinian mysteries were celebrated in the month of April,—in the middle month of the spring,—at which time, in every religion, the festival of the Resurrection was

likewise celebrated, suggests at once an intimate relation between the mystic festival and the returning of spring.

Then, too, the corn and the fruit of the vine,—bread and wine,—the symbolic elements of both the Eucharist and the Eleusinia, again suggest coincidental relations which can scarcely be accidental. Bread,—the fruit of the earth, as Persephone was the daughter of Demeter,—and wine,—the fruit of the vine, symbolizing the blood of Bacchus, which was given the celebrants to drink—were alike the suggestive elements of both the Christian and the pagan cult. These mystic symbols, in the Eleusinian worship, referred to the peasant celebration of the dying of the summer days, as their golden glory sank into the gloom and solemn grandeur of the approaching winter season, and the universal delight which once again animated the world when, bursting the icy bars of the wintry prison, the skies were set with radiant hues, and the earth blossomed and fructified with bounding life.

We are still further reminded that the Feast of the Resurrection is the remnant of a primitive nature-myth by the fact that a similar festival is found in all the principal ethnic religions of antiquity. It is a crass error, inculcated by the overpowering presence of an authoritative tradition, to assume that the conception of a demi-god snapping the bonds of death, of a so-called Savior trampling the great Terror beneath his heel, and overcoming it for the universal benefit of the race, is to be found alone in the legends of Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding the results of modern scholarship, which establish

the contradiction of the above assumption, it is nevertheless contended by the Christian polemic, as was stoutly asserted by St. Paul, that the entire theological superstructure of Christian theology is reared upon the incontrovertible fact that Jesus was the one and only human being who ever arose from the grave, and prophesied the final resurrection of the race.

In what follows I shall show that many traditions exist relating to so-called saviors, concerning whose prophesied or realized resurrection there are many legends.

The famous lines in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as translated by Addison, run as follows, and relate to the tradition that Æsculapius, as a son of God, arose from the dead:

> " Once, as the sacred Infant she surveyed,
> The god was kindled in the raving maid;
> And thus she uttered her prophetic tale:
> ' Hail! great Physician of the world, all hail!
> Hail! mighty Infant, who in years to come,
> Shalt heal the nations, and *defraud the tomb!*
> Swift be thy growth, thy triumphs unconfined,
> Make kingdoms thicker, and increase mankind.
> Thy daring art shall animate the dead,
> And draw the thunder on thy guilty head;
> *Then shalt thou die, but from thy dark abode*
> *Shalt rise victorious, and be twice a god!* ' "

In this connection we should not fail to study the curious ceremonies which were performed in the worship of Adonis, a Phœnician, Greek, or Egyptian god, according to the legend traced. The

secular story which has descended to us is that Adonis was a marvellously beautiful lad of whom the goddess Venus became enamoured, to whom he was permitted to return and to live every half-year after he was killed by a wild boar. The most conservative authorities admit that the god Adonis was probably the same as the god Thammuz among the Syrians. From the name Adonis the Hebrews acquired the ordinary name Adonai for the unpronounceable name of their god—Jehovah. The Syrians and Hebrews were very intimate throughout their history. Among these Syrians there prevailed a resurrection feast, celebrating the victory of Adonis, which was transported to Greece, among whose Asiatic colonies the first Christian churches were established by St. Paul and the Apostles. It is, therefore, very necessary to the understanding of our thesis that we study the nature of these Adonian ceremonies.

There is in the writings of Julius Firmicius, who lived in the reign of Constantius, a startling passage which was brought to the light of modern eyes by the distinguished Christian theologian of the last century, Dr. Parkhurst. Firmicius writes this passage in an oration which he is delivering to the Christian powers, in order to incite them to seize the pagan temples and desecrate them by the destruction of their false idols. He is trying to persuade the emperors that these ancient pagans were seduced by the devil into anticipating the worship and history of Jesus Christ, and therefore they should be persecuted for their blasphemy. Hence, he must reveal the whole story. "Let us," he

says, " propose another symbol . . . of which we must relate the whole process in order that it may be manifest to all that the law of the divine appointment hath been corrupted by the devil's perverse imitation. On a certain night (while the ceremony of the *Adonia*, or religious rites in honor of Adonis lasted) an image was laid upon a bed, and bewailed in doleful ditties. After they had satiated themselves with fictitious lamentations, light was brought in; then the mouths of all the mourners were anointed by the priest, upon which with a gentle murmur he whispered:

> ' Trust ye, Saints, your god restored,
> Trust ye, in your *risen* Lord;
> For the pains which he endured
> Our salvation hath procured.'

Upon which their sorrow was turned to joy, and the image was taken, as it were, out of a sepulchre."[1]

The close resemblance between the realistic ceremony of death and resurrection in the Christian churches and that of Adonian temples requires no further comment.

We shall also discover on further study that not only was there a close resemblance between the features of the Christian and Adonian ceremony of the death and resurrection of their respective heroes, but that the teaching to the communicant and the implication as to his future life were almost identical.

[1] Taylor, *Diegesis*, p. 162.

There is a passage I find in Calmet's "Fragments,"[1] which reads as follows:

"In these mysteries [of the Adonian ceremony], after the attendants had for a long time bewailed the death of this just person, he was at length understood to be restored to life, to have experienced a resurrection; *signified by the admission of light.* On this the priest addressed the company, saying, 'Comfort ye, yourselves, all ye who have been partakers of the mysteries of the deity thus preserved; for we shall now enjoy some respite from our labors'; to which were added the words: 'I have 'scaped a sad calamity, and my lot is greatly mended!' The people answered by the invocation, 'Hail the Dove! the Restorer of Light!'"

From this quotation we learn that light had a mystical meaning in the ceremonies as indicating the fact of the resurrection, or the entrance of the soul into the light of the eternal life.

I quote the following inscriptions found in the Catacombs of early Christianity which imply the same sentiment:

"She departed desiring to ascend to the *ethereal light of heaven.*"

"Eutuchius, wise, pious, and kind, believing in Christ, entered the portals of death, and has the rewards of the *light of heaven.*"

"Here sleeps in the sleep of peace the sweet and innocent Severianus, whose spirit is received into the *light of the Lord.*"

"Nevertheless she occupies not the doleful seats

[1] Doane, *Biblical Myths*, p. 218; Higgins, *Anacalypsis*, vol. ii., p. 114.

behind the threshold, but inhabits the *lofty stars* next to Christ." [1]

It cannot but awaken the suggestion in the thoughtful mind that here we find the symbol of light referring to the future state, and that in the Adonian ceremony the same symbol was similarly employed.

It might be asked how came the notion to prevail that light is the symbol of the after-life. There must be some suggestion in man's common experience to bring this symbol into common religious use, and I think we shall fail to discover its origin until we learn the origin of the ceremonies themselves.

As I think it can be demonstrated that the Christian Resurrection Feast descended from a similar feast among the ancient pagans, it would be well here to study the origin of the Adonian worship, from which manifestly the Christian institutions were either borrowed, or with which, and for identical reasons, they adopted similar rites and customs.

In McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia* we find a hint as to the origin of the Adonian myth, which I quote:

"Adonis or Thammuz appears to have been a sort of *incarnation of the sun*, regarded principally as in a state of passion or sufferance, in connection with the apparent vicissitudes in its celestial position, and with respect to the terrestrial metamorphoses produced, under its influence, upon vegetation in advancing to maturity." [2]

[1] Withrow, *Catacombs*, p. 427.

[2] Art. "Adonis."

This is undoubtedly the key to the entire legend. But it is not only the key to the legend of the Adonis myth, but as well to the myth of the resurrection both in the pagan religions and in the Christian.

As we have already pointed out, the rising and setting of the sun, the arrival and departure of the seasons, all dependent upon the sun's courses, were made the occasion of the especial religious festivals of the past. What more natural, then, than that the setting of the sun at night, or his deep descent into the gloom of the wintry season, should be chanted in songs of sorrow and pain; while his return at dawn and at the vernal season, when for six months he remained the golden groom of the skies, should be celebrated in the symbol of "light," the element of his glory and presence?

Now, strange to say, the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus entered very late into the legends of Christianity. We have no better authority on this problem than the Catacombs of early Christianity. I therefore quote from Withrow: "The early believers avoided, as though prevented by a sacred interdict, any attempt to depict the awful scenes of Christ's passion, the realistic treatment of which in (mediæval) Roman Catholic art so often shocks the sensibilities and harrows the soul. . . . Hence we find no pictures of the agony and bloody sweat, the mocking and the shame, the death and burial of our Lord."[1]

This is certainly a remarkable admission for an orthodox Christian polemic to indite. But Dean

[1] *Catacombs*, p. 273.

Milman[1] says even more strongly: "The Catacombs of Rome, faithful to their general character, offer *no instance of a crucifixion*, nor does *any allusion to such a subject of art occur in any early writing.*"[1]

Perhaps, however, a still more astonishing admission is made by the Roman Catholic writer, Dr. Northcote, in his work[2]: "The Passion is not represented *literally*, but under the veil of *secrecy*. It is not our beloved Lord, *but some other*, who bears the cross. The crown which is placed on his head is of flowers rather than of thorns, and corresponds better with the mystical language of the Spouse in the Canticles than would a literal treatment."

Professor Piper, the great German archæologist, adds his valuable testimony and says,[3] "the death and resurrection of Christ have not at all been made the subject of representation in this period."

Says Withrow: "The oldest extant representation of the crucifixion is a miniature in a Syrian evangelarium, of date A.D. 586, now in the Laurentian library at Florence. The treatment of the subject is exceedingly rude, bordering on the grotesque."[4]

Thus we find that there were no inscribed legends of the crucifixion or of the resurrection until the sixth century of the Christian era. Now, Christianity, as Mosheim, the Christian historian, reminds us, did not hesitate to imitate the "mysteries" and

[1] *History of Christianity*, book iv., chapter iv.

[2] *Catacombs*, p. 130.

[3] *Ueber den Christlischen Bilderkreis*, p. 7, quoted in Withrow, *Catacombs*.

[4] *Catacombs*, p. 275.

institutions of the pagan cults, which surrounded it; and we further know that Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries was the hot bed from which sprang the ecclesiastical usages of the early Church, which have since become integral parts of the Christian system. The worship of Adonis, with its curious death and resurrection feast, so closely resembling that of the Christian usage, was an Egyptian and Syrian rite.

Says Professor Mahaffy, lecturer on ancient history in the University of Dublin[1]: "The resurrection and reign over an eternal kingdom by an *incarnate mediating deity*, born of a virgin, was a theological conception which pervaded the oldest religion of Egypt."

But the admission of Dr. Northcote, the Roman Catholic authority above quoted, calls for a further investigation. He intimates that the crucifixion was originally disguised "under a veil," and the original figures represented hanging on the cross were not those of the Christian Saviour. This is one of the curious facts revealed in *The Catacombs*, and is exceedingly suggestive. Renan says "The Good Shepherd of the Catacombs is a *copy from the Aristeus*, or from the *Apollo Nomius*, which figured in the same posture on the *Pagan* sarcophagi, and still carries the flute of *Pan* in the midst of the four half-naked seasons."[2]

No wonder Dr. Withrow asserts that the first representations in art, which entered the Christian

[1] *Prolegomena to Ancient History*, quoted also by Doane, p. 221.

[2] Quoted in Knight, *Ancient Art and Mythology*, p. 22, note; and Doane, *Myths*.

legends only as late as the sixth century, were very crude. In short, they were manifest efforts to reproduce the symbols of the pagan legends in Christian art and worship.

"The obsequies of Adonis were celebrated in Alexandria with the utmost display. His image was carried with great solemnity to the tomb which served the purpose of rendering him the last honors. Before singing his return to life there were mournful rites celebrated in honor of his suffering and death. The *large wound* he received was shown, just as the wound was shown which was made in the body of Christ by the thrust of the spear. The Feast of the Resurrection was fixed on the 25th of March."[1]

In the custom of fixing the celebration of the Resurrection at the period of the breaking up of the winter season, and the advent of the vernal days, we can trace the direct lineage of this religious rite straight back to the pagan Eleusinia. The "spear thrust" is a manifest reference to the golden shaft of Hyperion (the sun) penetrating the frigid side of wintry earth, and drawing forth the life-giving fluid of its entrails.

But now that we have traced, I trust successfully, the naturalistic theory of the origin of the doctrine of the Resurrection, which necessarily causes us to halt at the historical verity of the actual Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the subject would be left still unfinished did we not further trace the continuous evolution of this fascinating legend from the ceremonial institutions founded upon it, to the spiritual and allegorical interpretation of which it is

[1] Dupuis, *Origin of Beliefs*.

susceptible, and which has afforded such consolation and spirited enthusiasm to those who have indulged it.

Nature presents to us in the resurrection glories of the vernal season the external symbol of a universal experience of the race of which at times such golden glimpses come to individuals as expand the heart and thrill it with a thousand ecstasies.

As, despite the gloomy deathfulness of wintry days, the indestructible force of life and regeneration inheres in every seed, and plant, and egg, and cell of the living world, which, when the natural gestation is complete, bursts forth in multifarious expressions of activity, so within the womb of human consciousness—deep beneath the data of commonplace experience—lie the unawakened potencies of the divine realm, which, when knowledge is engendered, come forth in forms of thought and deed and character.

Just as, ere the full flood-tide of spring complexions the world with its variegated tints and shades, suggestive intimations of its approach are discerned in the quivering soil, the loosened streams, the timid and slender blades of grass, so, at times, the soul discerns vague intimations of its power, and longs, with an indescribable yearning, for a full awakening of complete consciousness. What intellectual human being has not discerned the quivering intimations of this divine approach? Who has not paused, with bated breath, for the ineffable epiphany?

Some more intently than others. But each human being, heir of the divine inheritance, is nor-

mally susceptible; and at times the race *en masse* has felt the bounding swell of its sublime uplift.

At those periods the earth witnesses her outbursts of popular uprising, her disorganizing and prophetic revolutions,—the dazzling illumination of some divine foreglimpse,—which sweep humanity through a maelstrom of political emotion and moral transformation, leaving it brighter, purer, better and keener than before their tempestuous advent.

These experiences teach everyone that there is somewhat profound, impenetrable, unrevealed, within oneself; some spiritual potentate or impalpable principle, some supreme prowess, of which he has discerned but dim and provoking intimations, but which he has never yet confronted face to face, to realize, absorb, and master.

Hence he dreams, he hopes and yearns with soul-striving and intellectual aspiration. Hence, his depths of spiritual gloom, in moments of disappointment and despair; his exultant ecstasy, when glimpses of his celestial self flit athwart his consciousness and stir within the illumining fires of a divine inspiration.

He comes to think of himself when sunk in the sodden flesh,—instinct alone with animal propensities and material ambitions,— as "dead and buried in trespasses and sins"—dead in the charnal house of massacred hopes and defeated aims. Nevertheless, he feels instinctively, however low his debasement, that he is not permanently a prisoner bound in the cell of gloom and melancholy. Still would he burst his bars; ascend to the light;

rejoice in the song and cheer of life. He would be free—free in uncaptive and unconquerable spirit; free in motive; free in mind; free in thought, in action, in achievement. He would know himself incorruptible, unconquerable, immortal!

"If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if through the Spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live." Paul's words find a sympathetic welcome in the conscious or unwitting yearning of every human being.

It is, therefore, I believe, a safe and justifiable conclusion to our argument to assert that though the peculiar ceremonies of all religions, especially the rites of the Resurrection Feast, may have sprung originally from the intimations and suggestions of nature, nevertheless, as man grew in self-consciousness he appropriated these ceremonies and "mysteries" as external symbols of his soul's experience and aspirations.

Hence the scriptures of all peoples assume a mystical and esoteric meaning and are outwardly represented as allegorical statements which the initiated alone can understand. To those who acquaint themselves with the profounder interpretation, the beauty and inspiration of all sacred writings become apparent.

"The invisible meaning, lying beneath the plain words, resembles the soul, in which the Rational Soul begins most excellently to contemplate what belongs to itself, as in a mirror beholding in these very words the exceeding beauty of the sentiments, and unfolding and explaining the symbols, and bringing the secret meaning to the light of all who

are able, by the light of a slight intimation, *to perceive what is unseen by what is visible.*" [1]

It was against this quaint and occult interpretation of scripture the orthodox theologians declaimed so determinedly throughout the ages. The esoterist insists that the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. But the dogmatist deposes that none knows the Spirit save Jesus Christ, and through him his divinely authorized Apostles, from whom all the duly appointed teachers of later times declare *ex cathedra* the Will of God. Hence Origen, once a chief teacher in the temple of the Christian mysteries, three hundred years after his interment was dishonored and anathematized, because dogmatical Christendom had learned that his highest and noblest teachings were allegorical and not literal.

Thus, for instance, he interprets the divine oracles regarding the marriage rite. "Since the law is a shadow of good things to come, and writes sometimes of marriages, and husbands and wives, we are not to understand it of the marriages of the flesh, but of the spiritual marriage of Christ and the Church. . . . Whoever, therefore, reads the scriptures and understands by them no more than what is carnal, errs, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." [2]

Nevertheless, though the dogmatician may deride the tendency, or gnash his teeth in distress over the indignity to his authority, and the benighting influence it exercises over humanity, it cannot be denied that such allegorical, mystical, dramatic,

[1] Philo; quoted in *The Mystery of the Ages*, Caithness, p. 248.
[2] Quoted in *The Mystery of the Ages*, p. 257.

and fantastic interpretation of the scriptures of all peoples and religions has ever charmed the simple and sincere, the unpartisan and aspiring among the race.

Each human being feels, however vaguely, that somehow deep within himself lies buried or imprisoned a dishonored divinity, whom to restore or resurrect, would constitute not only the highest joy but the crowning triumph of his life.

Therefore he plots and toils, dreams and experiments, that somehow he may woo the sleeping god from his drowsy chamber; nay, indeed, if he be dead, e'en resurrect him from his spiritual grave.

As Demeter wandered all the gods among, and mortals too, crying for her lost daughter; as Orpheus sounded all the mysteries of heaven, and feared not to penetrate even the terrors of hell for his lost Eurydice; so every human being feels at times that he will never cease to search for his imprisoned divinity — for his lost soul-love. Like Pygmalion, he discerns his inward spiritual beauty, howbeit in petrified form; and like him, he storms the skies and bombards the throne of the deities till some Venus shall descend and deliver to him his chaste and matchless Galatea.

All the mythologies and scriptures, all the dreams and poetry of literature and art, in all climes and periods of human history, have sprung from this sublime Mythos.

Every human being instinctively worships at its shrine; the gods themselves are conceived at its fount of inspiration.

Here, indeed, is a Resurrection whose legend

may be verified in every life. Once portrayed in the mystic realism of Eleusinian and Osirian ceremony, or in the solemn pageantry of Adonian or Roman Catholic ritual, or even in the simple nature-worship of the autochthenes of earth, it has evolved into a sublime cult which, wrested from the deformities it has suffered at the hands of pottering theologians and obfuscating metaphysicians, may once again be enshrined in the bosom of enlightened seekers, and become the harbinger of their illumination—their herald of transcendent happiness.

PART TWO

THE MAKING AND THE UNMAKING OF THE CREED OF CHRISTENDOM, OR THE DOWNFALL OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

THE MAKING AND THE UNMAKING OF THE CREED OF CHRISTENDOM

CHAPTER XI

THE GODFATHERS OF THE CREED

THERE was no written creed in Christendom until after the first quarter of the fourth century. The Apostles' Creed is mythical in its origin; it dates centuries after the career of the Apostles. The first creed was formed in the days of Constantine,—that astute Christian Emperor,—Talleyrand and Machiavelli combined,—who, as the suitor of Apollo and Minerva, crowned his pagan worship with the name of Christ.

What circumstances so long postponed the formation of a creed? You will look in vain for Christ's, Peter's, and Paul's formulated, systematic, and logical statements of belief.

It was not then deemed necessary. The religion of Jesus took root in the soil of ignorance. The unlettered, untutored, and unschooled were at first

captivated. They had formerly known only a religion of gloom and despair; of direful fate and unpromising eternity.

The Jew of that period put all his faith in a future earthly kingdom, whose attainment on this planet was, however, wholly problematical.

The Greek fired his veins with the liquor of æsthetic intoxication, poured in libation to the gods of physical beauty, sensuous and vain indulgence.

The Egyptian buried his hope beneath the swathings of withered mummies, and knelt in terror before the frightful visage of the gods of the Two Truths.

The Roman exhausted his surplus vitality in the mad revelry of conquest, quaffing ever the lethean draughts which the goddess of fate concocted.

But Jesus came with the beacon light of hope.

He taught men to study the horoscope of their eternal future, to cast their all on securing a home amid the comforts of the unseen world. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the despairing and the dull, the crippled and the accursed, rushed after him with the enthusiasm generated by a new-born hope.

The wise, the learned, sought him not. Few were the converts from Synagogue and Sanhedrim; from Senate and Areopagus; from the temples of Osiris and Serapis. But helot and plebeian, artisan and toiler, leper and lazar,—the outcast and ostracized,— these thronged around him wherever he roamed.

Beautiful picture! Splendid hope! Sublime revelation!

At length the sentiments of the new religion per-

colated through the armies, the academies, the halls of philosophy, and the palaces of royalty. The learned, the bookish, and the wise began to investigate it. Then came the "rub"; for Greek met Greek and the conflict of the ages had begun. From that day the religion of Jesus knew no more peace, and from that day it had lost, and I fear forever lost, its pristine purity.

When Paul transported the religion of Jesus from Jerusalem to Antioch it lost its Semitic savor and assumed the complexion of Asiatic thought. The Petrine interpretation of that religion was forever lost and Paul's pagan discoloring forever after affected a form of religious thought at first exclusively Jewish. At Jerusalem Jesus was regarded as the founder of a new sect of the old religion; but at Antioch, under Paul's leadership, these Jesuan Jews were for the first time called "Christians."

Ere long they who had been especially disciplined in the schools of Oriental philosophy became the teachers of this new religion. The conceptions of Clement, Origen, and Augustine had been deeply dyed in the brightest colors of the ancient systems. It was soon discovered that the religion of Jesus was colored by the prevalent philosophy of each locality that harbored it.

When this religion was planted among the Iranians it assumed the tints of Zoroastrian dreams, as exhibited in the tenets of the Manichæan sect. When it wandered through the libraries and ancient philosophies of Alexandria its clear light was refracted in the diversified beams of the various Gnostic and Theosophic sects. When it abode

in the solemn temple of Jerusalem it became ceremonial and Mosaic. When it caught the fire of Western zeal and enthusiasm it created a Montanus, —the spiritual Luther of his age, —and dragged the world into a maelstrom of religious fanaticism and spiritistic phenomena — seizing in its foam even Tertullian and many another mighty leader of the Faith. Wherever the seed of Christianity fell it grew upon the new soil—not as an exotic, but as an indigenous plant, flowering into the familiar blossom of its native clime.

Soon, then, all Christendom was crowded with ten thousand theologies; it became, indeed, a vast university of individual schools, varying with the deductions of personal leaders; and that age (as fraught with intellectual energy and eager thirst after knowledge as is our own) was soon fretted with the myriad tracings of confused systems and theodicies, all converging in the Christian Church and mutually vying to do highest honor to the name of Jesus.

Nevertheless, it was inherently an age of freedom. Where so much thought abounds liberty must have sway. But at that very period entered the dividing wedge of tyranny. Then were forged the chains of slavery; then were throned those ecclesiastical hierarchs, the priest, the prelate, and the Pope.

Some one soon asked the question, as they are beginning to ask it to-day, "Whither, whither are we drifting?" The tendency was to confusion, dissipation, despair. Authority was but a target pierced with the shafts of ridicule. Faith had not yet become blind;—she bowed to no earthly potentate;

she was the friend and sponsor of Reason. Some one must arise to shape the true and final thought. Somewhere must be found a legitimate teacher to lead back to the Master, Christ. Who shall it be?

There was an Emperor! He held within his hands the reins of universal government. The world was at his feet. Why should he not also order the world's thought, hope, inspiration, religion, as well as its laws and temporal felicities?

The Emperor had his Senate: why should not the Church possess her Councils and counsellors?

The Emperor had his army and its numerous officers: why should not the Church possess her deacons and bishops, her presbyters and popes?

The decrees of the Senate under approval of the Emperor were final: why should not the epistles and pronunciamentos of the Councils be infallible?

The officers of the army ever genially and sardonically enforced the Emperor's laws: why should not the clergy, the militant officers of the Church, wield an equal power, and as coolly enforce the declarations of organized ecclesiasticism?

Thus slowly were the chains of intellectual bondage forged. So waxed the Church strong in worldly wisdom, till she became the spiritual giant of the ages. At length Authority was crowned a King. Ecumenical councils were the final tribunals of redress. Creeds were the lictors of the new-made rulers; and beneath the standard of Dogma the world of "believers" were driven into abject slavery.

But the pages of history have yet a severer lesson for the discipline of our religious zeal. Who were

the makers of the Creed? What was their mental stature, and how moulded their moral figure? Were they true savants, profound students, unimpassioned teachers, honest guides? It is the unpleasant and indelicate duty of the historian to dwell upon some facts which are both distasteful and repulsive to the present age. But the Creed, which is worshipped to-day as the oracle of a divine revelation, had never attained the degree of its present authority had it not been at its inception debauched by the graceless plots of political marplots who halted not even at the shedding of blood for the attainment of their ambitious ends. They who had become the Church's highest officers—its generals and martial conquerors—its archbishops and metropolitans—stooped to chicanery, political trickery, and brutal outrage, in order to propagate and enforce a Creed whose pessimism has ever since begloomed the intellect of Christendom.

My own language is inadequate to present a just description of the moral methods of these ancient creed-creating councils. I will ask one whose pen was ever charged with magnetic eloquence to do me service here. Let Dean Stanley, one of the Church's erudite and honored sons, tell in his own forceful way what domineering brutality engineered the shaping of this ancient Christian creed:

"We must not suppose that the councils acted from spontaneous conviction. A determined mob from Constantinople, from Syria, from Egypt, pressed upon them from without. It was like the tyranny which the clubs exercised over the convention in the time of the French Revolution. The

monks were for the most part laymen, but laymen charged with all the passions of the clergy. . . .

"We are told that at the beginning Nestorius himself was the aggressor. The monks, who were the first to catch any scent of heresy, were in the first instance stripped and lashed with loaded whips —laid on the ground and beaten as they lay. [Who would n't be orthodox under such a pressure!] But the passions and penalties were not confined to one party. Cyril brought with him from Alexandria the savage guard of his palace, the Parabolani, or the 'death-defiers,' whose original function was to bury the dead, but whose duty it now became to protect the archbishop against all enemies; the sailors whose rough life laid them open to any one who hired them; the sturdy porters and beggars, and the bathing-men from the public baths. These men sat at the doors of the council and *the streets ran red with the blood which they shed without scruple.*

"Barsumas, the fierce monk with his band of anchorites as fierce as himself, came hither with his reputation ready made for *knocking heretics on the head* with the huge maces which he and his companions wielded with terrible force on any who opposed them. The whole was crowned at the critical moment by the entrance of a body of soldiers with swords and charged lances, or with chains to carry off the refractory members to prison.

"Some hid themselves under the benches [evidently some of the heretics made good soldiers and 'ran away that they might live to fight another day' —but who could blame them?]; some were compelled to sign the decree in blank [*i. e.*, sign a blank

paper at the point of the lance and suffer the archbishop to write in the creed of their sworn allegiance].

" Flavian, archbishop of Constantinople, lay waiting for the moment of escape, when Dioscorus, the archbishop of Alexandria, *struck him in the face with his fist*. The two deacons, one of them himself afterwards the archbishop of Alexandria, seized him round the waist and dashed him to the ground. Dioscorus kicked the dying man on the side and chest. The monks of Barsumas struck him with their clubs as he lay on the ground. Barsumas himself cried out in the Syrian language, ' Kill him, kill him!' He expired from this savage treatment in the course of a few days." [1]

Think of the situation. Here are assembled the spiritual leaders of the age; great theological questions have arisen; great issues are at stake; future ages are to be affected by what decisions may be reached. Calmness, deliberation, and wisdom, at such an hour, are indispensable. But here we have a savage partisan mob howling for the orthodox party.

Which shall it be: Arian or Trinitarian, Necessitarian or Arminian, Catholic or Gnostic ? Let the votes be cast. But the votes shall be bludgeons and maces, drawn swords and lances, doubled fists and bullish heels. And there upon that ancient cathedral floor, polished with the congealed blood of partisan agitators, was enacted a scene which must needs bring shame to all future ages, but which has ever since affected the sanity of those

[1] Stanley, *Christian Institutions*, p. 289.

who have been willing to shed their blood in defence of the Creed that was then conceived and authorized. Then surely

> " Judgment . . . fled to brutish beasts,
> And men had lost their reason."

And yet, let us not despair. The good triumphs at last. The history of all religions has ever been the same. Their origin is good, true, beautiful, and divine. All great spiritual leaders have wisely guided the world to goodness. No great teacher ever designed to do the world a harm. Nay, nor ever has a great and honest man injured the world —be his sentiments what they may.

How great, how noble, how pure have been the inspired leaders of the race! Had but all humanity heeded the fervent strain of Buddha's philosophy and then passed suddenly from earth, surely Nirvana had been peopled with high-born sons of men!

Had Krishna, Zoroaster, or the old Brahmins been followed faithfully and aright by all their disciples, how glad and good, how pure and perfect, had been this distorted world of ours.

But all too soon the haloed heads and golden hearts of those divinities were shrouded with earthly ignorance. Too soon their true histories (the simple stories of their chaste and holy lives) are lost to mankind, and nothing remains but their eidola, the mythical simulations of their faded and forgotten selves.

Who is Krishna, Confucius, Fo, Zoroaster, Sakya Muni, Moses, Jesus? All, all are lost in the mist of myths—phantoms of departed dreams!

Religions run rapidly from purity and freedom to policy and pietism. First, there comes a noble and exalted leader, then, a few comparatively good and simple imitators; then in rapid succession follow colleges, courts, and councils; politics and polemics; creedism and cruelty; dogma and "damnation." Arrogant priests and fashionable piety, churchly pageantry, cowled monks and black-robed dominies, hermitries, monasteries, and anchorites, mocking miracles and gloomy superstitions, festering immorality and cankering corruption—these are the rapid but all too sure steps of the world's successive religions. None escapes. The story of their evolution is identical in all. The early Catholic missionaries in China were struck dumb to discover in the vestments and mummeries, the worship and habits, of the Buddhist monks, the very facsimile of the usages of Roman Catholicism.

The religion of Jesus must be catalogued in its history along with all the rest. Let us not laud too highly the great reformations of Christianity and base the hope of its permanent integrity on such self-resuscitating influences. Other religions much older than our own have enjoyed their continuous reformations, yet at the last sank into decay and dissolution.

Witness the Jewish religion and its humiliating career. It brought forth a Moses and a David; a Josiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah; the iron-hearted Maccabæus and the heavenly minded Hillel; and yet, at the last, though benefited for three thousand years by these recurrent and profoundly invigorating awakenings, it was tossed by the storms of

dissolution into the four corners of the world, and to-day gibbers in the voice of thin philosophy—the mocking skeleton of its departed self.

The Vedic religion had enjoyed many such reforms from the first Zoroaster and the Brahmins to Gotama Buddha, to Chunder Sen and the Brahma Somaj. The Parsee religion is, itself, the decaying remains of a great spiritual upheaval against the old Brahminic ecclesiasticism, as was the Buddhist corpse whose ghost still prowls about the mosques and caves of Asia.

Christianity has, as yet, enjoyed but one such general awakening, and but four hundred years have elapsed and she is again rapidly sinking into her old state of decay. Indeed, she bids fair to repeat the history of the Indian religion and, in time, reinstate the primitive spiritual rulers; that is, restore Romanism as they anciently restored Brahinism after Siddhartha's great reform. Witness in this connection the Tractarian movement and the relapse of many Anglican clergymen into Romanism.

I have no faith in any religion securing a different fate. The tendency of all is and ever has been toward corruption and dissolution. But why? Because some fixed, unalterable, and universal Creed (the inevitable forerunner of tyrannous ecclesiasticism) has ever been foisted on credulous "believers."

The creeds have been the cradles of a corrupt and political clergy. Here have they been rocked into life, until ready to receive the crown, and then ever have the free-born sons of earth sold their birth-

rights, and themselves crowned the heads of their chosen tyrants, to bow in servile fear before the gods of their own creation.

Only when the Creed collapses are the bonds of superstition burst. Only when the enslaving Creed is banished are temples of learning and pure philosophy restored, illuminated with the radiance of genuine culture and enlightenment. Therefore, I say, the cry of the age is against the Creed—yea, any and all creeds, which bind the soul and bite into the moral consciousness.

The age demands freedom for the teacher, freedom for the worshipper, freedom for the thinker, freedom for honesty, sincerity, and truth. Without this privilege neither science nor religion can conquer.

Henceforth, if we are asked for our creed and faith, we would point not to scrolls and tomes, musty with the dust of superstition; not to priests and palimpsests; not to synods and decrees; not to rites and vestments; but to an honest heart inscribed with the motto of all zealous lives: "Here is sincere search after truth."

CHAPTER XII

THE AGE OF CALVIN

WE have now reached a very important period of the history of creed development. The age of John Calvin, thanks to his own superior genius and the lingering echo of his authority in the Westminster Confession, borders very closely on our own.

It remains for us to inquire how these lingering relics of superstition, ignorance, and bigotry, which to-day compel even the cultured orthodox to revolt, came to be so long-lived, to lurk surreptitiously within the niches and recesses of great institutions of learning, and to lie, like a repulsive skeleton, beneath the cloth of the sacred desk.

It cannot be denied that Calvinism is to-day a theological dead-letter. No preacher dares to elucidate or sustain it. Every apology will be made for it—it will be patched up, renovated with revisions, variously construed, excused, or defended. Yet Calvinism, pure and simple, no man dare to vindicate in the face of popular intelligence.

No less a man than the learned Dr. Philip Schaff, an eminent and erudite Presbyterian theologian,

has himself saved the army of liberal teachers the onerous necessity of awakening the conservative multitudes of our age to the realization of a vigorous fact in what he said some years ago:

"I know of no Presbyterian minister in these United States who preaches the decree of reprobation or preterition, the irresponsibility of the sinner for not accepting the Gospel, the limitation of the atonement to the small circle of the elect, the eternal damnation of non-elect infants dying in infancy, and the damnation of the non-Christian world — Heathen, Jews, and Mahometans — who still continue by far the greatest part of mankind; and yet these doctrines are supposed to be taught expressly or implicitly by the Westminster standards."[1]

How, then, came such doctrines ever to be accepted? How came the world, and its very best people at that, at one time to believe that these very doctrines, now so nauseating and repulsive, were the revelation of God and the truest interpretation of the scriptures?

May we not here ask if it is a source of wonder that multitudes are refusing henceforth to be driven in the leash of theological authority, refusing to bow in abject servility to the dictates of Heaven's assumed ambassadors and vicegerents, in matters pertaining to religious truth and spiritual revelation, when they observe at every epoch of the world's history these vast eruptions welling from the depths of popular intelligence, which so effectually overthrow the wisdom and learning of those who have

[1] *Creed Revision*, pp. 13, 14.

so long sat in high seats of power? As one well says: "Revision is in the air"—revision of Bibles and creeds and confessions! And this means at once the disenthrallment of the human mind in matters of religion, and the displacement from false seats of authority of those who have been so long self-deceived, and thus perhaps unwittingly deluded the people who implicitly followed them as their spiritual guides.

In order, therefore, to understand how the Westminster standards were granted such authority and power, we must revert to the history of the Reformation, inaugurated in the fifteenth century. That period of the world's history was similar to the one in which we live.

The discoveries of human research, the inductive process of reasoning, the inventions of genius, the expansion of the known surface of the earth, the rising of the physical sciences from mere empiricism and speculative conjecture to careful experimentation and accurate generalization, the slow bringing of the starry heavens from the realms of romance and fancy to the keen and searching study of the human mind—these were some of the forces then in action which were rapidly supplanting the usurpation of pretentious authority and disenthralling the race from mental slavery.

Theretofore the Roman Catholic Church had been in supreme power. Her sceptre was feared as a wand of terrible potency. She gave life and imposed death. She held in her wizard-hand the sun and all his wandering retinue of worlds. The earth trembled beneath her anathemas. As a

consequence, the human mind had grown stolid and indifferent in its slavish ignorance.

Individual liberty was a sentiment whose realization had long since faded away from the sunny fields of papal Italy, or died to swanlike echoes in the unfrequented groves of classic Greece. The whole human race was swallowed up in the Church, and the Church was swallowed up in "one only man." Ignorance, total ignorance, had lowered like a cloud of midnight blackness upon the earth.

But of course it could not always be so. Slow and suppressed rumblings were often heard rising from the lower strata of society. But they who sat on Vesuvius heights cared little for the feeble warnings. Roger Bacon, John Huss, John Wyclif, had already shaken the foundations of authority until the base had become unsteady. Therefore when Martin Luther, Zwinglius, and Melanchthon came upon the scene, they found an already honeycombed ecclesiasticism yielding to their resistless blows.

Naturally, at such a time, we should expect a general breaking up of all established conventionalities; a general letting-loose of the dogs of mental warfare, resulting in partial bedlam and confusion and in some cases descending to positive degradation. This same fact has been true of every period of revolution or general reformation.

Immediately after the introduction of any great truth into the world, and its popular acceptance, there is a sudden rebound from severe authority on the one hand and grovelling subserviency on the other, till the heavens grow dark with maudlin

sentimentality, and the world is deluged in a sea of speculative folly and ethical experimentation. It was so immediately after the popular acceptance of the religion of Jesus. Every phase of psychical investigation and absurd credulity came rapidly in vogue; the earth swarmed with theories, fancies, sentiments, deluding dreams, and dreary vaporings, till it seemed that the Almighty Himself must take His place in the seat of authority and declare to man the indisputable dicta of truth.

The same state of things we discover, though perhaps in a less marked degree (from the fact of the far less general diffusion of knowledge), at the time of the introduction of Buddhism into India and the general breaking up of the Brahminic religion. I will reproduce here an eloquent passage of Rhys-Davids's, which vividly pictures the chaotic condition of the social and moral world at a period of general religious awakening, moral regeneration, and intellectual disenthrallment: "How much greater the disaster [than the fall of an individual] when a whole nation to whom the doors of liberty have once been opened closes them upon itself and relapses into the bondage of delusion!"

Describing the feast of Juggernaut he gives a fine symbolic illustration of the chaotic yet tragic moral and mental condition of such a momentous epoch:

"When we call to mind how the frenzied multitudes, drunk with the luscious poison of delusions from which the reformation might have saved them, dragged on that sacred car, heavy and hideous with carvings of obscenity and cruelty—dragged it on in the name of Jagannath, the forgotten teacher of

enlightenment, of purity and universal love, while it creaked and crushed over the bodies of miserable suicides, the victims of once-exploded superstitions —it will help us to realize how heavy is the hand of the just; how much more powerful than the voice of the prophet is the influence of congenial fancies and of inherited beliefs." [1]

And this Jagannath, or Juggernaut, feast of suicidal insanity is enacted at every turn of the wheel of universal reformation and religious transformation. Long confined in the dungeon darkness of superstitious ignorance and fear, when suddenly released, the multitudes are crazed with visions of freedom and possibilities of individual liberty, and naturally conjure up every departed spirit of long-cherished delusions to feed their fancy and glut their curiosity.

What unwisdom, therefore, at every such period of the world's history, to assume that such social upheavals and mental ravings are unique and unparalleled, and must therefore be extirpated at the point of the sword and with the scourge of the flame, lest like poisonous weeds, once rooted, they will grow profusely, and ultimately choke out the fairest flowers in the paradise of truth!

But with what far finer sagacity and insight did the intuitive teacher of Galilee discern the true cause of such incidental overgrowths and perhaps poisonous infections, when he enjoined the sevants to suffer the wheat and tares to grow up together till the day of reaping should come, when Truth, the final reaper, would separate them, and reveal the kernel intact in purity and untarnished by its association!

[1] *Origin and Growth of Religion, Illustrated by Buddhism*, p. 33.

Here is a strong hint for the chaotic mental period through which our age is passing. The insanity of this Jagannath feast (if all these wanderings, dreamings, and ravings of mental investigation and spiritual speculation can be called insanity) can never be checked by laws and legislatures, by priestly potentates and papal bulls, by the denunciations of ecclesiastical conclaves and the defiant utterances of teachers clothed in the prerogatives of their audacious usurpation. Truth alone, slowly revealing her unguised visage through the veil of time, can check what conceptions have deflected from her steady and persistent path. Until Truth speaks from the throne of individual consciousness in the name of her own undisputed authority, ignorance can never be dissipated or its retinue of plausible delusions swept from the mind of man.

Perhaps at no period of history is this fact better illustrated than at the entrance of John Calvin on the arena of the Reformation. There had grown up during the first century of the Reformation many of those erratic sects or committees which had undertaken to solve the great problem and mystery of life by shattering every conventionality and laughing at the tyranny of all antiquity. They were variously called — Anabaptists, Hoffmanists, Spiritualists, Liberalists, Pantheists, Antinomians, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Rationalists, etc. These ultra sects were the result of nothing but another outcropping of the speculations of neoplatonism.

To show how in all ages the trend of free religious thought is along identical lines, I will give a brief

description of these sects which I borrow from an article in McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*.[1]

"The system of the Libertines was pure Pantheism. They held that there is one universal spirit which is found in every creature and is God. All creatures, angels, etc., are nothing in themselves and have no real existence aside from God. Man is preserved only by the spirit of God, which is within him, and exists only until that spirit departs from him; instead of a soul, it is God Himself who dwells in man; and all his actions, all that takes place in this world is direct from Him—is the immediate work of God. Everything else, the world, the flesh, the devil, souls, etc., are by this system considered as illusions. Even sin is not a mere negation of what is right, but, since God is an active agent in all actions, it can be but an illusion also, and will disappear as soon as this principle is recognized. They made great use of allegory, figures of speech, etc., taking their authority from the precept 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'"

Here we discover a clear intimation of the spiritual philosophy which is so prevalent in our day.

It is no wonder that in the age of John Calvin, as in all other awakening periods of history, these teachings should have led off into erraticism and vagaries; should have led some, perhaps many, into devious paths of compromise; should have tended somewhat to loosen the ethical standards of the age.

Yet I will confess it is a debatable question whether the ethical standards adopted by the

[1] Art. "Libertinism."

Church under the leadership of the great Reformers, as we shall soon see, were any less inclined to lead humanity astray than were the alleged deviations of the Brethren of the Free Spirit. But John Calvin found himself at once occupied, after the assumption of his clerical duties in Geneva, in combating these growing and popular erratic sects.

The author of this article in the *Cyclopedia* says: "No one really did more to counteract the principles of Libertinism than did Calvin himself. It is, in fact, due to his efforts that this sect, this baneful curse, left France to take refuge in its native country, Belgium, and that it finally disappeared altogether." John Calvin's *Institutes* were largely written in order to counteract the influence of this sect. His whole soul was aroused to indignation and hatred towards this system of speculation; and history proves to us that Calvin's conscience was not too sensitive to use, for the extirpation of this phase of free thought, means which to-day would receive no countenance even in the ultra-conservative quarters of Christendom.

Of course we cannot, at this late date, say much in defence of Libertinism. It doubtless sank into an immoral sect and a dissolute community; but I think the charge is falsely made against its philosophy and highest leaders. All who have studied the course of Liberalism everywhere, know well how the offscourings of society congregate around its outer edges, and in its first stages frequently cover its surface till the clean body of its primitive hope is wholly covered with a mantle of coarseness, grotesqueness, and indecency.

Universalism, Spiritualism, Rationalism, Socialism —all these movements have passed through these early phases. One may even discover this condition in the early history of Methodism, and will find John Wesley himself testifying to the wild fanaticism and indecent extravagances of which he himself was the avowed but unwitting instigator.[1]

Libertinism, the first bold, uncompromising rebound from ultra-Romanism and half-developed Reformationism, was just passing into this, its natural development, when John Calvin confronted it. Had it been left alone, had the executioner's axe and laws of exile been unconcerned about this new uprising, and had it been allowed to run its course, doubtless it would have evolved into an ultimately purified and attractive spiritual and social force.

But Calvin seethes and grows irate at mention of its name. He writes to Margaret, Queen of Navarre, who had exultingly embraced its spiritual philosophy, and therefore was much offended by Calvin's insinuations against it:

"I see a sect the most execrable and pernicious that ever was in the world. I see it does harm, and is like a fire kindled for general destruction, or like a contagious disease to infect the whole earth. I am earnestly entreated by the poor believers, who see the Netherlands already corrupted, to put my hand to the work."

He did put his hand to the work; and the last of

[1] See his *Christian Perfection*. Paul's early letters clearly prove that a similar immoral condition prevailed among the first converts. See 1 Cor. v.

the sect were driven from Geneva in 1555, either through the prisoner's cell, exile, or the executioner's axe.

Now, in this stormy period Michael Servetus appeared upon the stage. He was a pupil of Calvin. But he could not accept his dogma of the Trinity. Therefore he left Calvin's school and dissociated himself from orthodox circles. Calvin found a slight plea against Servetus's moral conduct, because he affiliated with his antagonists; but against his personal, moral character no charge could be brought.

Calvin alone was responsible for the committal of Servetus to the flames. Calvin had complete control of the Geneva Republic and was the leader of the council. He had once before " saved " Geneva from the Anabaptists. The council was therefore ready to pay him any honor.

It is useless to undertake to defend Calvin. At best it can be said he pleaded for a milder method of execution. Yet who shall say that slowly bleeding away at the sharp point of a sword is a more merciful death than being consumed by angry flames ? If Calvin were averse to the burning or execution of Servetus, it is strange that he followed his barbarous " taking off " with a vigorous vindication of the propriety of banishing or slaying obnoxious heretics. It is well known that Luther and Beza and Melanchthon applauded the deed. Dr. Philip Schaff silences the tongues of those who would exonerate Calvin and the Reformers from any culpability in the execution of heretics. He says: " Calvin wished the sword to be substituted

for the stake in the case of Servetus; but as to the right and duty of the death penalty for obstinate heretics he had not the slightest misgiving, and it is only on this ground that his conduct in the tragedy can be in any way justified or at least explained." [1]

I cite this case of Calvin and his sympathizers and coadjutors, not to cast any vicious stain upon their names, but simply to illustrate how, when one subjects his conscience and judgment to the tyrannous authority of a creed, it may harden his heart and dethrone his reason. Therefore the spirit of the age rises in arms against the claims and commands of creeds. Therefore the judgment of the age cries against the right or duty of any individual to sign away his personal liberty by his subscription to the authority of any theological confession.

But why should there be any effort at this late day to exonerate the Reformers in their well-known occupation of persecuting the heretics, when it is commonly known, as Hallam so well puts it, that "Persecution is the deadly original sin of the Reformed churches: that which cools every honest man's zeal for their cause in proportion as his reading becomes more extensive"?

Again, to prove the immoral consequence of a popular subjection to the tryannous authority of creeds, hear what this sagacious but cautious author elsewhere says: "At the end of the sixteenth century the simple proposition that men for holding or declaring heterodox opinions in religion should not be burned alive or otherwise

[1] *Creed Revision*, p. 7, note.

put to death, was itself little else than a sort of heterodoxy."

Now, it is very natural to pass from the career of John Calvin to the history of the creation of the Westminster Confession. It is very natural; because the Westminster Confession stands to-day perhaps the clearest, strongest, and most plausible exposition of simon-pure Calvinism.

We shall now study the history of the formation of the Westminster Confession. The conclave which created it had originally intended simply to revise the Articles of Religion in the Anglican Church; but finally abandoned that idea and labored for a long period to formulate what has been for centuries the boldest and most startling landmark of the theological expression of any age.

The especial feature to which I wish at this juncture to call attention, is that of assigning to the *civil government* the right and duty of calling synods, protecting orthodoxy, and *punishing heresy!* Here was the entering wedge of all the barbarism which ensued. Here we shall discover another illustration of the tendency of authoritative and autocratic creeds to spread dangerous and barbarous customs throughout the world. No sooner had the creed been formed and legally established than its murderous work began.

The Episcopalians had been in control of Parliament till the Revolution. The Protector was himself a moderate and tolerant man. His voice was for peace and charity. He would even remove certain legal disabilities from the Jews. But "the

Presbyterians constantly labored to thwart the measures of the Protector. They declared that those only should be tolerated who accepted the fundamentals of Christianity, and they drew up a list of these fundamentals which formed as elaborate and exclusive a test as the articles of the Church they had defeated." [1]

Neal, in his *History of the Puritans*, affords some very positive but startling information on this theme, as evidenced by the following:

" In 1648 the Presbyterians tried to induce the Parliament to pass a law by which any one who persistently taught anything contrary to the main propositions comprised in the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation should be punished with death; and all who taught Popish, Arminian, Antinomian, Baptist, or Quaker doctrines should be imprisoned for life." [2]

Now let us not forget, as Mr. Lecky so comfortingly reminds us, that one of the motives furnished the Presbyterians of Cromwell's day, who were so anxious to imprison their opponents, was the speculative theory of the Anabaptists that the soul sleeps after death till Gabriel blows his trumpet! Then, Calvinists could be satisfied with nothing short of seeing the rejectors of the creed cruelly burning forever and forever in the caldrons of hell.

Perhaps we have produced sufficient historical evidence to illustrate the barbarous influence of mandatory creeds; to prove how heartless and savage they will make their sincere professors; and to illustrate how as yet a usurpatory creed has never

[1] Lecky, *Rationalism.* [2] Pp. 211–212.

afforded the world an iota of good, but has proved everywhere harmful and demoralizing.

No one can justly object to a written creed as being the best attainable expression of supposed truth at certain stages of the world's history. But when these fallible and feeble expressions are set down as august and absolute authority, as very revelations from On High; when these are set up as standards beneath whose yoke all the prisoners of the faith must submissively bow and march—then they become a force for evil which should be resisted by the liberated intelligence of humanity.

In the face of such faults is it not amazing that learned, conscientious, tender-hearted, and honorable gentlemen should assemble at this day in a public conclave to debate the question of the revision of this Creed whose subject-matter is so obnoxious and repulsive, whose history is so replete with disgrace and outrage! One would think that men of the high, respectable standing of these clerical gentlemen would rather blush for shame because of the past history of the Creed, and would much prefer to keep it buried beneath the dust of the ages where, until its recent resurrection, it had so long silently lain.

But I desire to call attention to one grave point. Why are the Presbyterians debating the question of creed revision? Had they been left alone this discussion would never have sprung up within the confines of this most Calvinistic Church. It is because of the strong and persistent antagonism of liberal religionists and untrammelled thinkers and teachers that the long-complacent and indifferent

pulpit-toilers have suddenly awakened to cast their eyes athwart the world, and discover the chaotic uproar and furious antagonism which the Creed has aroused.

Had the liberalists adopted anything but an aggressive warfare the Church would have remained silent and moribund, the Creed would have continued a living lie, and the world would have more and more drifted from its doors. Thus much does the established Church owe to aggressive liberalism. But of the Creed itself—its repulsive dogmas, its barbarous portrayal of Deity, its absurd heaven and exaggerated hell—I shall speak further on.

Up to this point we have learned at least that historically the Creed has accomplished no iota of good for the world, but filled it with torture, distress, and despair. But be it ever remembered that the creed in itself, were it delivered only as an expression of thought, would never have produced such outrage; but the creed as autocrat, the creed as king and parliament, as army and ordnance, has whelmed the world in agony and woe, severed the bands of natural relationship, dug trenches for the legions of its slain, and deluged the earth with streams of fratricidal blood.

However, this heretofore impregnable Gibraltar of theology bids fair to succumb to the ceaseless bombardment of the popular conscience and intelligence. The Gamaliels who have so long defiantly defended the letter of this ancient creed without qualification or reserve, at last are at least willing to listen to arguments and to consider the propriety of its final abolition.

The situation is interesting. The creed which for these two hundred years has been hoisted so high, as the strongest and surest symbol of Christian truth,—a veritable revelation from God through his prophet, John Calvin,—is called before the bar of common-sense and asked to show cause why it should not be forever squelched! But the amusing feature of the situation is suggested by the fact that the only opposition to a rescission of the creed is advanced from the point of view of pure policy or expediency. No one seems to argue that the creed must be maintained intact because it is right, true, and beautiful; but because the cause of religion and the integrity of the Church will be materially compromised if the plea for revision be assented to.

Here, for instance, is Dr. Francis L. Patton, president of Princeton University, who leaves no doubt in his eloquent sentences that his only reason for opposing revision arises from the plea of expediency. In the discussion on Creed Revision, ten years ago, he said:

"It is because of my interest in maintaining the common faith of all Christians,—I do not say Protestants, but all Christians, Roman Catholic and Protestant,—as well as because of my desire to see the Presbyterian Church stand true to her glorious history, that I am opposed to the proposition to revise her standards. I am sorry that the agitation has occurred; but I trust that God in His good Providence may make it the occasion of a *more emphatic avowal of the system of doctrine*, in the maintenance of which our Church has been so greatly blessed. I do not anticipate a storm, only a little

breeze that will break the folds out of the old blue banner of the Covenant, and set it fluttering with the promise of new achievements as it heads the advancing column of the Calvinistic forces, which, I do not doubt, will keep the fame already won of being among the heaviest and the best in the sacramental host of God's elect."

How fervently John Calvin's spirit breathes anew in Dr. Patton's martial metaphors! Calvinism was born in the throes of conflict; its breath is flame; its speech is sharp as Damascus-blade; its imagery is of the battlefield; its prayer is for victory, be the moral consequences what they may.

Dr. W. C. Roberts, a former moderator of the General Assembly, at the same conclave asserted his position on the question of revision with far greater clearness—purely one of policy; and that, too, a paying one. He said in an interview in the Pittsburg *Dispatch:*

"An attempt to construct a new Confession with such doctrines as that of the Trinity, Election, Perseverance of the Saints, and even Preterition left out, would not only open flood-gates not easily shut, *but endanger donations and bequests amounting to millions of dollars.*"

The italics are mine. Truth, apparently, is not to enter into the question at all: simply money,—donations and bequests; these are to determine the question to revise or not to revise. How absurd, pitiably yet grossly absurd, would such an attitude appear to Jesus, who hated every phase of Phariseeism!

But the confusion of the Presbyterians is further

evidenced by the curious apologies they are publishing *apropos* of the proposition to revise the creed. I copy the following from the New York *Evening Post*, 1890, as a specimen of the extremities to which Presbyterianism is being driven:

"The air is full of dreadful phrases, 'prenatal damnation,' 'perdition of infants,' even 'infants in hell,' and others which I will not quote, all of them attributed to Calvin, or held to be expressive of his teaching. Not one of them, scarcely anything whatever to justify them, can be found in his voluminous writings. On the contrary, he pleads earnestly that children should be admitted to baptism as a means of their regeneration, and at the same time denounces 'the fiction of those who would consign the unbaptized to eternal death.' . . . There is not, nor has there ever been, a line in the Westminster Confession about the 'fate of non-elect infants.' The chapter in question is setting forth *how* the elect are saved; adults by faith, infants dying in infancy, and idiots by other means. It is not discussing the subject of salvation at all. The phrase 'elect infants' of course, implies non-elect infants; but that any non-elect infants die in infancy, or any who die in infancy are non-elect, is not involved in a fair interpretation of the language used. What some of us would have preferred would be a less ambiguous statement here, and an explicit statement elsewhere of the salvation of all infants, which we believe the scriptures to teach; not, however, by the absurdity of making the non-elect infants participate in the salvation of the elect, because to a Calvinist salvation implies election."

Now, it would much delight me, as doubtless it would every lover of his race, who longs to exercise faith in its intelligence, sincerity, and magnanimity, if the rash vagaries of the above communication could be proved to be truth. But alas! for the rarity of literary honesty. I am constrained to show that so far from the truth is this lawyer's effort to enter a demurrer and quash the case, that it were not more untruthful to declare the west to be east, the heavens to be the earth, and the milky nebulæ to be flat-surfaced planes of cosmic dust.

First, let us read the Creed itself, and see whether it is simply defining the question of salvation, and has no reference to reprobation or damnation.

"*Elect* infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh where and when and how He pleaseth. . . . Others *not* elected . . . *cannot be saved* [!] . . . and to assert and maintain that they *may* is very pernicious and to be detested." [1]

In the face of this statement how futile the plea of the individual who wrote in the above newspaper: "There is not, nor has there ever been, a line in the Westminster Confession about the fate of non-elect infants." Such advocates and apologists must surely have persuaded themselves that this ancient and mouldy code of faith is so securely held within the musty vaults of ecclesiastical seminaries, accessible only to the elect, that the common student could not avail himself of the pleasure of examining it.

It happens, however, that the whole air of late

[1] Westminster Confession, ch. ii., §§ 2 and 4.

has been filled with gaseous explosions, emanating from these musty vaults, so that the doors have been thrown wide open, and everybody has been invited to enter and see for himself. The result is that now the masses are apprised of the fact, now they know that what has been so long supposed to be a fabrication, spun out of the alleged fantastic brains of anti-Christians and so-called infidels, is proved indeed to be a fact,—stubborn, stunning, and unanswerable.

The Creed is now popularly known to be as crude and repulsive as it has ever been declared to be by those who had learned long ago to abandon it because of its spiritual inanity and dogmatic audacity.

The especial section of the Creed which proves to be most horrifying to the modern conscience is that above quoted, referring to the damnation of non-elect infants. This is by no means its most repulsive or morally audacious teaching, inasmuch as it is simply incidental, as I shall soon show, to its logical conclusions.

But the modern conscience has evolved to a higher appreciation of truth and sympathy than that of three centuries ago, and hence cannot now believe that the human, say not the Christian, conscience was ever so low.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHRISTENING OF THE CREED

IN the previous chapter we observed that in the early Church there was no formulated expression of Christian dogma. There was individual freedom—every believer shaping his own theology if he possessed any. The aim of each follower of Jesus was, not to find a theology or a creed, but to find the life which Jesus had lived and revealed.

Character stood as the supreme arbiter of salvation. Assent or dissent to creed in order to eternal happiness had as yet found no room in Christian instructions.

Says Pressensé: "The first practical lesson which it" (the early Christian Church) "will teach is this: to repudiate alike the religious radicalism which denies all revelation and the narrow orthodoxy which insists on the acceptance of its own interpretations. In truth neither the one nor the other finds any sanction in the heroic church, which was wise enough to encounter fundamental errors with the simple weapon of *free discussion*, and to vindicate the legitimate independence of the human mind by the very variety of its schools and formularies." [1]

[1] *Early Years of Christianity*, vol. ii., p. 472

In view of this fact it is easy to trace the gradual development of the power and authority of the creed. Read the so-called Apostles' Creed and you can discern no hint of authority. It was in its original form simply a plain confession of what was commonly believed among the early Christians, but assumed to give no definitions or to authorize any interpretations.

The fact is, the original Apostles' Creed is simply a setting forth of the master-features in the career of Jesus Christ as they were first understood among his followers. Slowly this creed was modified as different legends about him began to be accepted, such as his "Descent into Hell," the "Resurrection of the Flesh," etc.

Says Dean Stanley: "The creed of the Roman Church came to be called 'The Apostles' Creed' from the fable that the twelve Apostles had each of them contributed a clause. It was successively enlarged. First was added the 'Remission of Sins,' next the 'Life Eternal.' Then came the 'Resurrection of the Flesh.' Lastly was incorporated the 'Descent into Hell,' and the 'Communion of the Saints.'"[1]

The noticeable feature of the pristine creed is that it assumes and asserts no authority for itself. But the Nicene Creed, which was formulated and promulgated by a conclave of the clergy after the Church had risen into political influence, closes with an anathema or curse on all who deny its salient doctrines.

From that age, creeds have assumed authority.

[1] *Institutions of Christianity.*

From that time, no man dared think for himself and obey the dictates of his reason and conscience concerning the most momentous problems of life. And yet, when from our present vantage ground we survey the rise and decay of creeds, we see how unreasonable were the original proclamations of absoluteness and infallibility.

I am free to say that that creed has not yet been written which approaches so near to final truth as to be justified in the court of common-sense in any claim to absolute or partial authority. Every creed yet written contains more error than truth. Every creed yet promulgated is but a shift for popularity and power — a glittering vagary to affright the ignorant and ornament the wise.

I desire to call attention to two very salient facts connected with the history of creeds. The first is that, *in all ages the subscribers to any authorized creed have always been in the minority even within the pale of believers.* The second is that, *so soon as a creed is established in power,— that is, so soon as the free thought of the people is congealed in frozen formularies,— so soon does the moral condition of the age begin to decline.*

If these two charges shall be found to be true they will certainly argue against the wisdom of the creed.

Is the first charge true ? Let us study the very age in which the first creed was promulgated to learn the truth or falsehood of this assertion.

What was the cause of the promulgation of the Nicene Creed ?

Heresies in vast numbers had already begun to

abound. Some authors assure us that the number of heresies in the early Church was fully 128. There are plain indications of powerful heresies in the New Testament.[1] Many of Paul's Epistles were written to thwart their influence, and it is well known that John's Gospel was avowedly written to counteract the growing popularity of the heretical Ebionites.[2]

But let us not forget that there can be no heresy without an established and recognized authority. When Paul proclaims his interpretation of a theological standard all who oppose him are heretics. Therefore Peter was declared a heretic by Paul, as were also Barnabas and the Christian Jews.[3] Many authors are therefore ready to believe, as I have just said, that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the primitive Christians who were originally but a reform sect or faction of the Jewish people, and that as Paul's interpretation of the religion of Jesus grew into popularity, the first Jewish Christians came to

[1] By many it is assumed that the Ebionites and Nazarenes, who rejected the doctrine of the supreme divinity of Jesus, and accorded him only a chief position among men, were the original followers of Jesus, and the Christians who followed in the wake of Paul were the heretics and dissenters. If the original effect of the mission of Jesus was merely to create a New Jewish sect, of which Peter was the traditional leader, which afterwards under the revolutionary leadership of Paul was converted into a new, paganized religion called Christianity (and I have already given considerable evidence in proof of this contention), then the declaration that the Ebionites were the original disciples of Jesus seems to have much force. If that be so then Christianity is the Great Heresy, and the whole Christian system is primarily heretical.

[2] The Gospel of John was written 100 or 125 years after the crucifixion of Jesus.

[3] Gal. ii. 11 *ff.*

be regarded as heretics and were therefore condemned indirectly and mildly in the writings imputed to John.

In the same manner the Gnostics had grown into prominence and popularity under their able leaders, Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, etc., so that when clerical Christianity assembled in the great conclaves at Nicæa and Calcedon they found that the largest number of believing Christians were not Catholic but Gnostic. Likewise when the great contest concerning the teachings of Arius broke forth in the Church, although the clerical authorities decided against Arius and his party, nevertheless the vast majority of Christian believers were Arian. Indeed, the active, aggressive, missionary Christians of the age were the Arian or heretical factions. Therefore I am prepared to assert that in every age the great majority of the devout and earnest Christians have been the heretics.[1]

It is argued by orthodox writers in proof of the accuracy of the Gospel records of the life of Jesus Christ, that these noble men and their followers would not have given their lives in sacrifice to their convictions of the truth of these records if they were not conscious beyond a peradventure that they spoke and wrote the truth. This argument is of course very weak. Yet if it be a good argument to sustain the principles of orthodoxy, why should it not be equally employed and with as good effect in proof of the honesty and earnestness of heretics? In the whole history of Christendom where can you

[1] See Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity* ("Heresies"); Stanley, *Eastern Church*, *passim*.

find more noble expressions of sacrifice and martyrdom than in the grand army of heretics who suffered for conscience' sake from the days of St. Augustine to the persecutions of the sixteenth century ?

Therefore it is one of the greatest stains on Christianity that the minority of its devotees, having arrogated to themselves authority and procured the assistance of the civil powers, have ever persecuted, even unto the most disgraceful death, the great majority of its believers, simply because in some few particulars they conscientiously differed from the assertions of a select and self-chosen few.

The next point which I wish to emphasize is that as soon as the common and free faith of the Church is narrowed and frozen into authoritative formularies, so soon does the moral standard of the Church decline and every species of iniquity find favor among its leaders.

A very common error that obtains in the minds of people at large is that good morals are always commensurate with correct belief,—that in proportion as a man varies from established standards of thought in his personal beliefs or convictions so does he in his private life vary from correct standards of conduct. This dictum of judgment holds so popular a sway in this age that it is well to refute it.

How can an intelligent person accept such a conclusion in the face of the fact that many of the noblest men and women who ever lived and loved were so defiantly heretical as to be publicly condemned and often slain ?

Think of Arius, of Valentinus, of Montanus, of Marcion, of Nestorius, of Zwinglius, of Socinus, of

Bruno, of Servetus, of Dr. Döllinger, of Père Hyacinthe, of William Ellery Channing and Theodore Parker, and the great unnamed army of heroic souls who suffered by the scores and hundreds and thousands in the days of fiery persecution rather than surrender their honest convictions and live the lie for comfort's sake while truth should perish!

But perhaps we can more effectively disprove this common error by a collective example than by that of innumerable individuals. I will quote from some eminent authorities to show that whole nations live a moral or immoral life, guided by the popular and highest standards, wholly disproportionately to their belief in accepted standards of theological authority.

Lecky, in his *History of Rationalism*, says: "The two countries which are more thoroughly pervaded by Protestant theology" (therefore of course orthodox—barring Roman Catholic judgment), "are probably Scotland and Sweden; and if we measure their morality by the common though somewhat defective test that is furnished by the number of illegitimate births, the first is well known to be considerably below the average morality of European nations, while the second, in this as in *general criminality*, has been pronounced by a very able and impartial Protestant witness, who has had the fullest means of judging, to be very far below every other Christian nation."

This fact Mr. Lecky advances to prove that not only in Catholic countries does there prevail this commonly unrecognized disproportion between faith and conduct but that it is almost as true of Protestant countries. Of course every Protestant is full of sufficient proof to establish the fact that

the people of Catholic countries, though the most devout in their faith, are nevertheless most incongruous in their daily lives. It remains, therefore, only to show that the same fact is true of Protestant countries.

Mr. Laing, in his *Notes of a Traveller*, gives this startling evidence: "The Swiss people present to the political philosopher the unexpected and most remarkable social phenomenon of a people eminently moral in conduct yet *eminently irreligious; at the head of the moral state* in Europe, not merely for absence of numerous or great crimes, or of disregard of right, but for ready obedience to law, for honesty, fidelity to their engagements, fair dealing, sobriety, industry, orderly conduct, for good government, useful public institutions, general well-being and comfort; yet *at the bottom of the scale* for religious feeling, observances, or knowledge, especially in the Protestant cantons, in which prosperity and well-being and morality seem to be, as compared to the Catholic cantons, in an *inverse ratio* to the influence of religion on the people."

With the above, contrast Carlyle's dithyrambic outburst, and observe how much safer is the voice of history than the rhapsody of a prophet. Carlyle says: "To such readers as have reflected on life; who understand that for man's well-being Faith is properly the one thing needful; how with it, martyrs, otherwise weak, can cheerfully endure the shame of the cross; and without it worldlings puke up their sick existence by suicide in the midst of luxury; to such it will be clear that for a pure moral nature the loss of *religious belief* is the loss of everything."

It is clearly manifest that the rejection or acceptance of a standard creed bears no possible relation to one's individual moral conduct. Yet it was on the assumed basis of this dictum,—that no disbeliever or heretic could be a good man,—that the pages of Christian history have been turned red with the blood of innocent souls shed in defence of a shadowy, vague, and incomprehensible theology.

Before I speak directly of that terrible record of human crimes, so complacently committed in the name of the gentle Galilean and his tender teachings of love, I must remind the reader how such disgraceful acts became possible in the name of his irenic religion.

It was argued that so soon as a man fell away from faith in the Creed so soon he must have fallen in his private character. But no one must stand as a representative teacher of the religion of Jesus whose character could not bear the test, therefore he must be driven from his post, and to make sure of his eternal silence he must be put to death.

Let us listen to the echoes of the past, and understand how these assumed leaders came so terribly to pervert the teachings of Jesus Christ. Says one: "The only foundation for toleration is a decrease of scepticism and without it there can be none. If by cutting off one generation a man can save many future ones from hell it is his duty to do it." It will surprise the uninformed reader to learn that it was so late a political leader as Charles James Fox who uttered these scandalous words. What then may we expect from the earlier ages?

Says Cyprian: "God commanded those to be

slain who would not obey the priests or the judges set over them for a time. Then, indeed, were they slain with the sword while the carnal circumcision still remained; but now since the spiritual circumcision has begun amid the servants of God, the proud and contumacious are killed when they are cast out of the Church. For they cannot live without it and there can be salvation for no one except he be in the Church."

Out of such Biblical arguments grew the papal decrees compelling civil magistrates to persecute heretics to the death. Thus the councils of Avignon in 1209 enjoined all bishops to call upon the civil powers to exterminate heretics, while the bull of Innocent III. threatened any prince who refused to exterminate heretics with excommunication and forfeiture of his realms.

So much for Catholic arguments and convictions. But no less the Protestant leaders stand convicted. While there were many Catholics, many noble souls, who argued against the lawfulness and justice of persecution, the power of the councils was against them. So, among Protestants there are found noble and heroic hearts who protested as loudly against persecution and intolerance as they did against Catholic supremacy. Such were Milton and Zwinglius, Socinus and Castellio. But, on the contrary, the powers of State and Church obeyed the more stentorian and ferocious voices of Luther and Calvin, Beza and Knox, Ridley and Cranmer; all of whom cried out loudly for persecution and suppression of the heretics.

When, however, we turn to the pages which

recount Christian persecutions and read that terrible story written in human blood it verily turns our blood to ice and blanches our cheeks with pain. Not a few, but hundreds, thousands, millions were killed.

A heretic was designated as a culprit—a felon—a tool of the devil, fit only for his dark angels and endless torture. One of the most fearful consequences of persecution was the taint it placed on the family of the heretic.

The same disgrace that to-day attaches to a public felon who is to slip through a gallows-rope into eternity attached in that age to a noble-hearted and heroic heretic. They pointed him out as the scoff and scorn of the age. They dressed him up in mock robes. His black gown, as he was led to the stake, was covered with pictures of the devil and his imps, in all manner of horrible shapes, as suggesting that the heretic was himself the very devil incarnate. Then, slowly, amid the jeers of the multitude and the groans of his immediate friends and relatives, he was led off to the fagots ready for the fuse. As the flames began to scorch his feet and gradually to singe and shrivel his flesh, the ghastly priests made the air ring with their orisons of praise to Almighty God for His unspeakable mercy in permitting them to rid the earth of another traitor to His cause.

Imagine what a heart of oak it must have required to withstand such fierce opposition and such abominable treatment! Yet these noble men and women bore it all for the sake of conscience, freedom, and truth. And when we recall that these were not occasional or infrequent occurrences, but

that the numbers of the persecuted ran sometimes into the millions, we see into what a pit of horrible perversion and corruption the once beautiful religion of the Galilean had fallen. And all because a Creed had been established as authority which bound men's consciences in a theological vise and blocked the way of the free soul toward the kingdom of Eternal Truth.

Let us now ask what were some of the principles for which the Inquisition contended, that we may discover whether the doctrine gained by the shedding of so much blood was after all a truthful or a worthy one. Here again our amazement will be multifold. All that was contended for was purest abstraction or abstruse metaphysics — or, perhaps, vaguest nonsense. Take the first great struggle the Church witnessed, a struggle that divided it into two mighty schisms, and has to this day left its impress on all Christendom. I refer to the Arian contest. One party proclaims itself *Homoiousian!* What did that mean? Merely that Jesus Christ in nature was substantially like the Father. Another party proclaims itself *Homoöusian.* And what was that? Simply that Jesus Christ in nature was not only like the Father in substance, but was verily, essentially, and absolutely identical with the Deity.

Now over this abstruse metaphysical question thousands of lives were lost, wars were waged, and rivers of blood were shed. But observe the absurdity of an age of scientific ignorance discussing such a question as that! An age that believed that the earth's surface was quadrilateral and flat; that the sky was a solid substance, and that the stars

were peep-holes into glory; that knew nothing of the chemical composition, and was totally ignorant of the physiology, of man or of any of the associate living kingdoms of animals; think of such an age arbitrarily fixing a fiat concerning the mysterious nature of Jesus Christ, when they knew absolutely nothing about the scientific nature of their own bodies—their chemical substances, their hygienic laws, or the composition and circulation of the blood within their very veins! Absurd? Ay, pitiable, appalling, sad! How fearful is it when ignorance is crowned a king! How dangerous when a little knowledge is set in authority—especially when in the hands of ecclesiastics and their political tools, who sway the sceptre of power in the name of religion.

But let us study those later and more intelligent periods of the world's history when persecution was still in vogue and duly sustained.

The Protestants have ever cried down the Catholics for their persecutions. But let us remember that Lady Macbeth could not wash her hands white lest they should incarnadine the sea. So Protestants cannot wash their hands clear of the blood of their persecutions. And their excuse for this atrocious abuse and misapplication of dogma was far less plausible than that of the Catholics.

The Catholic Church had not relinquished its priority of age. It had proclaimed its absolute and unique power. It was God's vicegerent. To interfere with this power was, as they professed to believe, to undermine the power and Church of God on earth. This would of course result in eternal unhappiness to the human race. But Protestantism

was a mere parvenu. It had not so much as the mantle of gray locks with which in charity to cover its dark deeds. It denied all authority to Rome—Rome which had for centuries displayed and preserved her power; nevertheless it claimed absolute and complete authority for itself.

But its very constituency disproved its claim of rightful authority. For no sooner did Protestantism break from Catholicism than it whirled off into countless divisions—never again to be reunited, but ever to be mutually opposed. As the worlds were formed from primitive cosmic nebulæ, whirling on and on till fleecy nodules rolled into spheres and constellations, so Protestantism whirled away from cosmic Catholicism and ever since has rolled on forming new rings and divergent centres.

Therefore, parvenu Protestantism, as an authority, appears puerile and absurd compared with staid, integral, compact, and rock-riveted Catholicism. And why should it not ?

The persistent and wholly inexcusable mutual persecutions which so long prevailed among the Protestant sects are full and sufficient proof of the worthlessness and criminality of binding creeds. Henry the Eighth dislikes the German reformation, but will instigate one of his own. The Anglican Church grows into mighty power, and the dissenters or nonconformists arise. The Presbyterians under Knox declare their principles; the Anglicans in defiance maintain theirs. Forthwith there appears the *odium theologicum* resulting in fiercest persecutions and most unholy deeds. Anon the Puritans arise and seek their rights—they, too, must meet the

volley of bloody ecclesiasticism till they are driven from English shores and come to America. Here they hope for a world of freedom, but soon discover the Catholics in possession of Maryland. These Catholics have, however, inaugurated a reign of toleration and charity, suffering all opposing faiths to live together in peace and harmony and affording ample protection for each.

But to the Puritans such a state is worse than heretical—it is diabolical. Therefore in order to enjoy perfect, selfish freedom, they establish a reign of persecution against Catholics, till blood traces in deep trenches the course of the Christian religion. So suffered the early Methodists. So the Baptists. No age is free from the curse. No faith has ever risen and grown, unscathed by the deathful hand of persecution.

And all for what purpose? Because each sect had concluded that it alone, forsooth, had at last discovered the philosopher's stone that transforms the base metal of existence into the golden wealth of eternal life. Because each sect claimed it had discovered the only road to heaven, it nailed up the signboard of its authority by the way. Whosoever obeyed and believed would be saved; whosoever believed not would be damned. But why wait for God to damn the disbelievers at the final day? Why should they further cumber the earth? Cut them down at once![1]

Thus, because the way of salvation was miscon-

[1] Jesus' unfortunate parable of the fruitless fig-tree which was cut down because it cumbered the earth was too often cited as sufficient divine authority for the cutting down of fruitless heretics whose existence, too, cumbered, needlessly, the heaving bosom of the Church.

strued, because the meaning and nature of salvation were most falsely interpreted, and because certain self-chosen leaders set forth the way of salvation in loudly proclaimed symbols, for these reasons alone the world was filled with fratricidal blood and the religion of Jesus retarded for centuries in its progress.

When men begin to fight for a creed they forget the purpose of religion. Innumerable have been the devout believers whose lives were sunk in deepest crime; who relapsed from exalted spiritual ecstasy to immoral indulgences, yet whose religious faith abated not.

Their faith was strong and incontrovertible in the written symbols; they believed. Enough! This alone would save them. Character would take care of itself. So long as their faith was secure their future was safe.

Such is the natural delusion caused by authorized dogmas of faith. Such is the deadly consequence of ecclesiastical creedism. Jesus taught nothing of it. His was a religion of love, truth, righteousness. His only aim was to elevate and ameliorate mankind. His only sword was love—his only persecution, persuasion. Were he here to-day who could believe he would for a single moment sanction the authority of conflicting creeds? It overthrows one's faith in the absoluteness of his power and supremacy to see how, for fifteen hundred years, his self-styled professors and devotees have grossly perverted his teachings and yet through it all his silence has been unbroken.

One would think that he who could "of these

stones raise up children unto Abraham " would long since have raised children of the true faith who would have captured Vatican, throne, conclave, and council, and forever banished ecclesiastical money-changers from the temple, that his pure and simple teachings might once more be heard, ungarbled, by an eager world.

It is for this we are struggling, we who disbelieve in any and all creeds; who believe that systemized dogmas set forth in confession and symbols have only perplexed the heart and confused the understanding of man; who hope to cry down all creeds and proclaim the disenthrallment of man from the bondage of ecclesiasticism.

Let us therefore learn the simple religion of love, brotherhood, truth, and character. Let us learn to make the highest conceivable moral standards our only symbols of faith.

Let us live in sublime and lofty thoughts,—" our thoughts ever in heaven,"—that our deeds may reflect the splendor of the empyrean where we dwell. Let us banish once for all the age and spirit of mediævalism,—of Calvin, of Luther, of Beza.

Let us welcome the spirit and lofty toleration of Milton, Zwinglius—the spirit of Jesus Christ himself. Then will the dawn of the New Age have begun and the dark cloud of crime, long gathered round Creed and Dogma, sink back into the night of oblivion—while the splendor of the promised vision will begin to illuminate the world with its fruition, and inaugurate the epoch of intellectual freedom, spiritual unity, and unbroken brotherhood, among all the races of mankind.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEFAMATION OF DEITY, OR THE SCANDAL OF THEOLOGY

I SHALL now show that the original framers of the Creed meant that it should be understood just as it reads, without any shade of the recently introduced qualifications.

The early Reformers, long before the Westminster Confession was created, held steadfastly to the doctrine of infant damnation. Take the Augsburg Confession, of which Melanchthon is the reputed author. It distinctly condemns those who affirm that children may be saved without baptism: "*Damnamus Anabaptistos, qui improbant Baptismum puerorum, et affirmant pueros, sine Baptismo, salvos fieri*" [1] (*Confess. Aug.*, Part I., Art. IX.)

John Calvin says with his accustomed clearness: "The children of the reprobate [*i. e.*, the non-elect] whom the curse of God follows are subject to the same sentence" (*Opera*, II.). Again: "You deny that it is lawful for God, except for misdeeds, to condemn any human being. . . . Put forth

[1] "We condemn the Anabaptists, who disapprove of the baptism of children and declare that children will be saved without baptism."

your evidence against God, who precipitates into *eternal death harmless new-born children* torn from their mother's bosom" (*De Occulta Dei Providentia*).

"As the eggs of the asp are deservedly crushed, and serpents just born are deservedly killed, though they have not yet poisoned any one with their bite, so infants are justly obnoxious to penalties" (Molinæux of France).[1]

To what extremes of unsympathetic hardness a cruel theology will drive even the kindest of men when they become enslaved to it, causing them to forget, if not to learn to hate, wife, mother, child, and father!

Once again hear John Calvin: "Very infants themselves bring in their own damnation with them from their mother's womb; who, although they have not yet brought forth the fruits of their iniquity, yet have the seed thereof inclosed within them; yea, their whole nature is a certain seed of sin; and therefore it cannot be otherwise than hateful and abominable to God."[2]

Now let us learn what the framers of the Confession themselves said concerning this repulsive doctrine. William Twisse: "If many thousands, even all the infants of Turks and Saracens, dying in original sin are tormented by Him in hell-fire, is He to be accounted the father of cruelties for this?"[3]

For a vivid picture of the disposition of these

[1] I am indebted for these quotations to a sermon preached by Rev. Henry Van Dyke, in the Brick Church, New York, and published in the *Christian Union*, Jan. 16, 1890.

[2] Bray, *Man and God*, p. 259.

[3] Briggs, *Whither*, p. 124.

eternally damned infants read Samuel Rutherford, one of the Scotch Commissioners who assisted in framing the Creed: "Suppose we saw with our eyes a great furnace of fire, . . . and all the damned as *lumps of red fire*, and they boiling and louping for pain in a dungeon of everlasting brimstone, and the black and terrible devils with long and sharp-toothed whips of scorpions lashing out scourges on them; and if we saw our own neighbors, brethren, sisters; yea, *our dear children*, wives, fathers, mothers, swimming and sinking in that black lake, and heard the yelling, shouting, crying, of our young ones and fathers"[1]; and so on *ad infinitum ad nauseam.*

What further need to show that the unchecked outcry of the modern conscience against all such calumnies of God and man is more than justified by the horrible pictures of divine atrocity to which the dictates of the Creed gave rise?

What wonder that one of the most popular of New York City's Presbyterian preachers cries out, in the debate on the question of revision: "I had never taken the trouble to read this Creed; but now that I have, compel me to believe in it and you compel me to become an infidel!"[2]

Is, then, Presbyterianism on the verge of total collapse, or is it about to put on its resurrection wings and soar into realms of rational theology?

There is no greater anachronism in this age than the Presbyterian Creed. It is this Creed alone which is responsible for the perverted conception of

[1] Briggs, *Whither*, p. 125.

[2] Dr. C. H. Parkhurst, as reported in daily newspaper, 1890.

God that grates upon the conscience and intelligence of the age.

This Creed pictures a God of supreme and absolute power, creating out of nothing a world inhabited by sentient and conscious human beings, who, because of no guilt or responsibility of their own, are doomed to everlasting torture.

Only a small number (the elect) are set aside by the Creator for salvation; the vast majority have no hope—their doom is sealed; the red-flamed, gaping jaws of hell await them.

Unborn children who have not yet awakened to consciousness are eternally cursed by a foreordained decree in the bosoms of their mothers. The flaming streets of hell are full of the shrieking multitudes of misery, who shout their everlasting curses against the God who made and damned them; while on high He sits benignly indifferent to their woes, like a heavenly Nero enjoying the fumes of burning flesh which ascend from the sulphurous conflagration as a "sweet-smelling savor" to His nostrils.

I challenge the students of the world's religions to discover a heathen god as reprehensible, repugnant, and atrocious as this God of the Presbyterian Creed.

It requires no prophet to declare that if Calvinism continues to offend the common-sense and intelligence of posterity the whole Church will be buried beneath an avalanche of indignation beyond the possibility of restoration.

It is incredible that men of learning, world-wide sympathy, and ordinary common-sense can adhere to such abhorrent teachings; or that they can

believe that the confession of such a faith is the stepping-stone to a paradise of peace.

But there is a humorous side to this serious discussion. Let us assume that the Presbyterian Assembly, whose voice is final, should revise the Creed, so that the Love of God would be supreme and all-prevailing; what then would happen? Imagine what a commotion there would be in hell, and what feverish expectation in heaven!

Countless millions of wretched creatures who have been burning for these thousands of years in stenchful flames, not knowing why, would find the way of escape made easy. The ramparts of heaven would be crowded with myriads of white-winged angels who would hang upon the battlements with outstretched, expectant arms. They would suddenly become like human beings and remember that they had hearts of love. God Himself would grow compassionate and drop tears of sympathy for those whom He had forgotten.

Little babies who had been burning for ages would come up to the throne with charred cheeks and singed hair, and ask God why He had been so mean and unkind to them. John Calvin himself would walk round the streets of heaven with a scowl of dissatisfaction on his face, exclaiming that God had become a weakling and yielded to the clamor of the mob. Jonathan Edwards would excitedly examine the well-wrought chain of his logic, and search for the cracked link that had given way and wrought all this embarrassing confusion.

Hell would look lonely; the fires would all go out; and nothing would be left of its ancient glory

but a few gray ashes. Heaven would be so overcrowded, the God of the Creed would be pushed off His throne, and in His stead would sit, requiring much less room, the modest figure of Impartial Love, whom all beholding would adore.

Which picture would the Presbyterian fathers prefer to behold: a seething, bubbling, and fiery hell, full of the symbolic fumes of endless misery, or a peaceful heaven, crowded with all the children God had created, receiving the everlasting favor of His blessing?

Let them not forget that the picture may be made according to their order! They are the artists and designers. They made the ancient hell and they can make the modern heaven. They conceived a God who is a demon; and they can now conceive and substitute for Him a God who is the Deity.

No demon can exist forever, be he on the throne of heaven or of hell. As the Presbyterians created their God, they must be responsible for Him. They alone inculcate in the minds of little children the belief that there sits upon the all-powerful throne of heaven a God who enjoys petty vengeance better than He does pity and forgiveness; who never winces when He sees millions of His own creatures, for whose existence He alone is accountable, writhing in such torture as even cannibals could not stomach; who smiles and smiles, and ever smiles, satisfied with His own peace and the triumph of His selfish plans, despite the shrieks and groans, the curses and denunciations of those who justly charge that He made them but to murder them; yea, that He is not content to murder them outright, but

prolongs the agony through the endless eons of eternity.

I challenge the most learned Presbyterian to prove that I have maligned the God of his Creed. I have simply painted His character in plain and homely language; but I have borrowed my colors from the palette of the Presbyterian Formulas.

If we must have some God, let us have one whom we can respect. If no such God can be found, then let the world move on as best it can, and deify MAN, rather than demonize DEITY.

CHAPTER XV

THE CRUMBLING CREED OF CHRISTENDOM

THE Presbyterian Creed is the most thoroughgoing and logical exposition of Christian theological thought. It is the most spectacular theological landmark of the ages. It is the effectual form after which all the creeds have been finally patterned. I do not mean to assert that it is historically the most ancient, for that were false; but I do mean to assert that it has outridden and overtopped all other formularies, and stands to-day as the most complete and absolute expression of stereotyped theological definitions.

Therefore, when the Presbyterians begin to revise they will surely engage in a Sisyphean task. Conflict on conflict will ensue; and this very proposed act of revision may become the particular rock on which the Presbyterian system will split. If they should undertake to revise the Creed, at what end will they begin?

What single link can they remove from this thoroughly welded chain of logic, and yet suffer it to remain intact? John Calvin was a logician more than a Christian, a philosopher, or a reformer.

His genius all must admire. He stood head and shoulders above his age. Surrounded by great and mighty men, where is one who has left so firm an intellectual impress on the world as he? Not Luther, Erasmus, Melanchthon, Zwinglius, Savonarola, Servetus, or Arminius. I look upon John Calvin as an Agamemnon among the intellectual giants of all time. He ranks greater than Moses, and equals, if he does not surpass, Paul in the grip he secured upon his age and the power he exercised.

Yet for all that, who of us does not to-day regret that John Calvin ever wrote and taught and led? The world was then blind enough and he was blind too, and together he and the world fell into the ditch.

To see how impossible it is to modify this Creed without breaking it into atoms, let us study its logic.

It begins by picturing God to us as an arbitrary, distant, and self-complacent tyrant. "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely and *unchangeably* ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of these creatures," etc.[1]

So God creates all things—yet He *does not* create them. He knew all the things that were to come to pass before the beginning of the world; yet when they come to pass, He suddenly becomes oblivious of the event. He established Adam in Eden, that he might enjoy it and be blessed; yet He meant that Adam should be tempted and fall. He

[1] Westminster Confession, chapter iii., article 1.

prearranged the machinery of the plot, shifted the scenery, built the stage, and put the actors on it; yet when Adam is tempted and falls, He suddenly "disremembers" everything about it, and thus escapes the burden of culpability.

Such is the relentless logic of John Calvin's Creed.

God descends from His oblivious realms and walks in the garden. He says to Adam, "What hast thou done?" Adam says, "I ate an apple." "Well, why did you eat the apple—did I not tell you not to?" "Yes," replies Adam, "but the woman Thou gavest me tempted me and I did eat." He asks the woman why she ate and tempted Adam, and she replies that the hissing monster that He placed in the garden to prowl around and frighten them tempted her and she ate. Now, this God, who had "freely and unchangeably ordained" that all this should come to pass, walks into the garden, naïvely assuming ignorance, and throws all the responsibility, blame, and consequence of this sin on these poor creatures whom He had foreordained to sin; and yet, though before they sinned He foreknew it all, after they sinned He knows nothing about it whatever!

Such is the absurd levity to which this logic is reduced.

Again, "By the decree of God some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life and others *foreordained to everlasting death.*"

Now, as God can foreordain everything without foreknowing it, and can foreknow everything without foreordaining it, of course He can forever damn inoffensive angels, infants, and other non-elect,

and still escape the charge of culpability for such damnation.

This singular feature of the Creed sustains the position of the ridgepole to the house. Take it away and the whole Creed tumbles to the ground. The Presbyterian God, foreordaining and foreknowing everything, of course must have foreordained just who should be saved and who should be eternally damned. Hence, if you take away a single iota of God's infinite foreknowledge, of course He will cease to be omniscient; therefore it is necessary that His foreknowledge be absolute.

But if it be absolute, then of course there can be for Him no surprises in the whole round of human vicissitudes. But if that be so, then He must have known from before all time just who would live forever and who would burn forever.

Therefore, that the absoluteness and completeness of this Calvinistic God may be maintained, the Creed declares: "*These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished*"! (Art. iv.).

This is the Calvinistic declaration of the conservations of forces theologically applied.

The logical deductions of the Creed hang upon the premise of God's foreknowledge and on predestination. This granted, and all the repulsive conclusions of the exact foreordained number to be saved and the exact number to be damned must of course follow. So, logically, the Creed was constrained to introduce the clause about infant damnation or deny

its pivotal premise that God was omnipotent and omniscient — foreknew and foreordained all things that come to pass. But to do this would be to destroy God Himself.

Hence, every feature of that Creed must remain as it is or the existence of the Presbyterian God be denied. Ay, this will result, even if you alter that ugly clause asserting the irresponsibility of man in his eternal fate, declaring "*Those of mankind whom God hath predestinated to life*, according to His eternal *and inimitable purpose*, *He hath chosen without any foresight of faith, or good works, or any other thing in the creature, as condition or causes moving Him thereto*"!

Of course I would not have this Creed destroyed as an historical document — as a landmark of the past, and a woeful warning for the future; but I would have it swept out of the churches absolutely; obliterated from the mind; never studied in our seminaries except as a musty relic of a controversial past, to be reviewed, if at all, casually, as one would notice the armor of the days of chivalry.

But to modify, revise, alter, or transform its phraseology or its sentiments, merely to resuscitate it and put it again in authority, is an insult to the intelligence of the age; is an unmitigated affront to the popular conscience; and is enough in itself to relegate forever to oblivion the ecclesiastical organization that would permit it.

Nor can the *general* Creed of Christendom ensconce itself behind the Presbyterian Creed, with the hope of escaping the denunciation of the age.

The logic of orthodoxy is identical with that of

Calvinism, although this may not be as grossly revealed in the established formularies to which she gives her consent. Orthodoxy, like Presbyterianism, postulates the existence of an all-powerful and all-good God, who created the universe and caused this planet to be populated by the human kind. It insists that this all-powerful God suffered the very children, whom out of love He had begotten, to be subjected to inescapable temptations and entrapped in the wiles of one "Devil," whom He also had created for the sole purpose of "devouring" human beings who fell within his grasp.

At length the whole human race having thus fallen, because of the transgression of its original progenitor, is eternally damned to the tortures of hell, redemption from which is alone possible through the sacrifice of the most holy and righteous Being in the universe, without faith in whose sacrifice the individual must forever burn and burn in the physical flames of perdition, or in the spiritual torment of a peaceless conscience, whose "worm never dieth."

Calvinism is not more cruel than modern orthodoxy—it is simply more logical.

The former ushers man into this world already guilty and damned—guilty without sinning, damned without a trial.

The latter denies that man comes already guilty from before the foundation of the world, but insists that he is tainted throughout his being—totally depraved—and through no effort of his own can he either think or perform a righteous deed, aspire to or attain a noble life.

While he is not damned by the decree of God, he is nevertheless cursed in the very quality of his nature. By indirection modern orthodoxy casts the responsibility for human guilt upon God, whereas Calvinism did so with undisguised directness.

According to the modern Creed, man, being thoroughly evil in his nature,—totally depraved,—cannot by any effort of his own become righteous or pure in thought or deed, but receives his inspiration to goodness from God Himself, who through "grace" prompts man to every exalted effort. But here enters a logical dilemma which is very embarrassing to orthodoxy.

If man be totally depraved and cannot by his own choice or power perform any good deed,—then how is it possible for him to accept through his own choice the sacrifice of another,—even God Himself,—for his salvation? The exercise of such a motive is the sublimest and most righteous of all human promptings.

How could tainted, accursed, sinful, totally depraved humanity ever acquire the capacity to exercise such a high hope and noble purpose, if man can exercise no good thought or deed by his own will unaided by divine grace? The overtures of Jesus, of a pleading, dying Savior on the "accursed tree," to such an incapacitated and unresponsive race must needs be as ineffectual as the songs of the Sirens in removing mountains from the Ægean shores.

If man be incapable of a good thought, a lofty aspiration, a noble deed, by virtue of the exercise of his own choice, unaided by divine grace, then he must needs be wholly irresponsible for the rejection

of all the overtures of divine grace, and the God who condemns him for rejecting that which he is incapable of receiving is indeed as repulsive as Beelzebub.

But, at this point, modern orthodoxy seeks to relieve itself from embarrassment by insisting that the grace of God is freely given through the Holy Spirit to all who desire to receive it; and if they refuse they do so at their own peril. But seed cannot take root and spring up in a rocky soil. Of what avail were climate and atmosphere and rain and sunlight to seed planted in such a barren place? The heart of a rock is not the womb that generates a flower. Thus, if the nature of man be as the rock, unreceptive and unresponsive, then, though "grace" were infinitely and eternally poured out to him it would avail nothing—for he receives it not, nor can respond to its overtures.

Therefore, modern orthodoxy, which postulates a totally depraved race, incapacitated from choosing, of its own free will and unassisted by divine grace, the overtures of love and mercy, and yet condemns that self-same race to eternal torture because of rejecting that which it is inherently incapable of accepting, presents alike with Calvinism a Supreme Being who is at once ungracious and abhorrent. Calvinism is less hypocritical than modern orthodoxy, because more candid, and apparently more repulsive because less deceitful.

"But," exclaims the defender of orthodoxy, "God chooses to save all and freely diffuses His grace for the salvation of every human being; he only is lost who refuses to receive."

While this reply does not in the least relieve the force of the above exposed inconsistency of modern orthodoxy, it introduces still another embarrassing feature.

If God be all-powerful, and all good, and his "grace" be infinite and universally diffused, then why is not the whole human race saturated through and through with this divine afflatus—and why is it not by nature pure as Deity and radiant as the beams that emanate from His bosom?

Can light and darkness mingle? Can truth and error be the same? Can "grace" and "guilt" exist in one and the same being?

If "grace" be goodness, then there can inhere in it no jot of evil. If "grace" be light, then in the soul in which it exists no shade of night can ever enter. If "grace," emanating from an infinite and all-powerful Being, be infinite, then its goodness must be all-effectual; then there is no darkness, no death, no damnation. Then all are saved already, because of the superlative power of the all-pervading spirit of Deity—and man is by nature not only not "totally depraved," but he is essentially and inherently pure, truthful, divine, and exalted.

The logic of modern orthodoxy drives it as irresistibly into optimistic Pantheism as the logic of Calvinism drove it into Fatalistic Materialism.

Here is the dilemma to which its own logic arrives: Either God is too feeble by His power or grace to save the human race, in which case He cannot be the Creator or Sovereign of the universe; or His grace, being infinite and supreme, necessarily

pervades all sentient beings, who reflect His divine nature and essential radiance.

There can be no neutral ground: God is either All or Nothing. Modern orthodoxy in seeking to escape the Scylla of Calvinistic Fatalism has rushed into the Charybdis of philosophical Pantheism. This the defenders of the Creed know all too well. Hence their ardent and determined effort to thwart all attacks of revision or annihilation of the Creed lest they surrender the very fortress of authoritative Religion to the Arch-foe of the Centuries.

I claim that autocratic creeds have ever been the dam stopping the free flow of religious earnestness; that they have ever shrouded the glow of spiritual enthusiasm with the gloom of confusion and despair; they have substituted distortion for harmony, insincerity for honesty, ignorance for information. They have been the vestal robes of virgin innocence in which ignoble bigotry has disguised its true nature and eluded the eye of the unwary.

I fail to see where a coercive creed has ever caused one forward march in the progress of religious or secular knowledge. I fail to see where such creed has ever ennobled a single life, embellished a hope, or glorified a character. I see in the creeds of dogma only darkness, ignorance, superstition, and intellectual distress.

And yet there is one Creed to which the whole human race can give assent. It is the Creed which avows its devotion to truth, intelligence, character, and love; which finds in the admonitions and suggestions of Nature its scripture of wisdom and its book of ethics. This Creed teaches men that there

is no higher purpose in life than that which promotes the unity of brotherhood, the hopefulness of human attainments, and the courage to disarm the intellectual foes of the race, at whatever cost.

This Creed imposes no limitations upon man's mental powers, nor sears his conscience with the hot iron of spiritual condemnation. It causes man not to fear to search the universe lest he shall be confronted by some awful autocrat to whose authority he must submissively yield, regardless of his own judgment or intellectual acumen.

It is the Creed universal, which discerns the oneness of Nature reflected in the potential unity of the human kind. Its God is expressed in the all-composing and sustaining power which builds the worlds of space and guides them in their rhythmic motions; which so perfectly balances the spheres in empty space that though unbound by visible chains they are as securely held as if by chains of adamant; and as the universe is thus firmly held together by one common purpose, prophetic of a final harmony, by this same power human beings have been developed from primitive stages of disharmony and contention to the promise of universal peace, even now forestalled in the growing sympathy of mankind.

This Creed looks for a God who is both father and mother, revealed in the majesty of Nature and in the tenderness of her spiritual powers. It discerns a Savior of the human race in each hero who through sacrifice, devotion, and achievement has afforded it an example worthy of emulation and a crown jewelled with the emblems of heroism and

honor. It points to the race at large as the universal incarnation of the Supreme Presence, through whose intellect, wisdom, and spiritual expansion it finds the largest expression and conscious manifestation of itself.

Man and Nature, in the light of this Creed, are One, because both dwell in the bosom of the Almighty, equally responsive to His pervading forces. Man is not above Nature nor beneath her. Nothing in the universe is inferior, nothing is superior. There is but One, and all things are but expressions of Himself. As love cannot be differentiated, save in its degrees and phases of manifestation, yet is inherently pure and ever identical wherever it may penetrate, so the one all-embosoming power of Nature is everywhere the same, however various may be its manifestations or how qualified the degrees of its expression.

This Creed calls for no God who sits as Creator, Judge, and Savior, all in one, for a race estranged from Him by evil conduct and spiritual darkness, susceptible of salvation only as He may arbitrarily proffer it; but it postulates a Deity who is already tabernacled in the bosom of humanity and recognizes Himself only through the recognition of His offspring.

This Creed abolishes all warfare between God and man, and endues the race with divine power by the recognition of its own omnipotence.

It teaches each individual unit of the race that it is not an orphan, drifting apart from the rescuing moorings of grace, but that whithersoever it may drift upon the pathless ocean of life, it is provided

with that divine power that rescues and sustains it amid all the storms and tempests of its experience.

This Creed teaches man that love is the one binding power of the world, and must needs be honored and obeyed in all human relationship, in order that the larger growth of spiritual prowess may be attained. It blends all creeds in one by banishing from all the conflicting and unessential elements in each.

It teaches man not to look upon his brother as degraded, fallen, and accursed with sin, but to gaze behind this outer mask of human ignorance, and behold the purified and exalted spirit within, which is the full expression of that divinity for which the soul of man has ever craved.

It does not banish God from the world, nor seek for Him beyond the inaccessible confines of the universe.

The God of this Creed lives with man in every act and thought, in every hope and aspiration, in every failure and disappointment. He is not only the God of Victories, but the God of Defeats. Nor does He come to condole with man only at the expense of some sacramental sacrifice, but wherever there is a human heart, however dismal or accursed, however forgetful of His glory and presence, there He sits, comforting, wooing, sustaining. For each man, according to this Creed, is himself a potential deity, and needs but to discover himself in order to confront the invisible Being who is both the Creator and Savior of humanity.

Such a Creed jars not the intellect or reason of the race, but spurs it on to higher attainment, and

to ever clearer discernment of that ideal for which it yearns. It is not the Creed of the slave, but of the freeman; not of the prison cell, but of the mountain height. This Creed, its followers believe, will yet conquer the intelligence of mankind, and be finally inscribed upon the indestructible scrolls of time.

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PART THREE

THE DAWN OF TRUTH, OR REASON RECONCILED AND RELIGION RE-ENTHRONED

THE DAWN OF TRUTH, OR REASON RECONCILED AND RELIGION RE-ENTHRONED

CHAPTER XVI

THE FUNDAMENTAL CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

IS theology an essential component of religion? Can we so separate the theological elements as to leave a residue of unalloyed spirituality? If we eliminate theology totally from the religious system, shall we deprive it of any virtually essential quality that will at once neutralize its utility and rationale?

It is always well to be clear in definition before we proceed to the discussion of an issue; therefore, let us examine the meaning of the two words referred to. *Religion* has etymologically two possible derivations. It may be derived, as Cicero insisted, from *relegere*, which means "to go through, or over again, in reading, speech, or thought." That is, to study and review with great care; to penetrate the depths of a subject and thoroughly digest its

essence; hence, to be careful, conscientious, thorough. Or, the word *religion* may be derived, according to Lactantius and the majority of the ancient authorities, from *religare*, which means to bind back, to obligate; hence, when referring to objects of worship, to hold in awe, to adore, to bind in sacred allegiance. However, even the old Latin usage of this term had reference not only to pure, inward piety, and the spiritual attitude of the individual, but as well to the system of ceremonies and rites that was attendant upon the pursuit of religious knowledge.

At the outset, then, we observe that the term was capable of a dual interpretation, and because of this fact a universal confusion has prevailed as to its exact meaning. To-day the common interpretation refers more essentially to rites, ceremonies, ecclesiastical usages, and denominational differentiations, than to the primary purport of the word.

Men do not search for religion, but for *a* religion. We do not ask, What is religion ? but, What is the religion of this or that sect, this or that people, this or that person ? To the ordinary mind the notion of a common religion is inconceivable. To such a mind, a unitary basis underlying all the ethnic religions—or even the various sects of any single religion—seems an *ignis fatuus* after which it is folly to chase.

The modern mind is imbued with the idea that religion is necessarily separable into antagonistic and ununifiable segments. The only possibility of unification among the world-religions would seem to exist in the absolute absorption of all the other

religions by some particular one. Each religion is convinced of its own superiority and universal adaptability. Of course, the Christian religion has made the boldest and most aggressive claim to this capacity—perhaps owing to the fact that it has become the religion of the Western nations and is endued with their enthusiasm and *esprit de corps*.

Even among Christian sects, however, the same spirit of denominational supremacy seems to prevail. Each sect is perfectly agreeable to the theory of the unification of Christianity on a common basis, provided that such sect may be considered the exclusive representative of the faith and gather within its circumgyrating arms all the others, which shall be lost in the glory of its own exaltation. But no Christian sect is yet willing to be dissolved in the common alembic and thus lose its individuality for the sake of the glorification of a universal truth. All sects—yea, all religions—claim to be seeking the attainment of the same end, namely, the purification of the race and the exaltation of Deity; but each seems to be too suspicious of the others to succeed single-handed in the prodigious undertaking. Hence arise friction, antagonism, bigotry, autocratic pomposity, and ecclesiastical arrogance.

Inasmuch, therefore, as the object of all religions seems to be the same, and differences arise only in the methods by which the ends sought for are to be attained, we must seek for the cause of these disturbances in the methods or systems rather than in the primary precepts on which they rest. This fact is strongly emphasized when we compare the original utterances of any of the great religious leaders.

How little variation can be discovered between the teachings of Jesus and Sakya Muni, or between Moses and Zoroaster! In essence the primitive sayings of these great Masters are identical. For instance, compare the "Beatitudes" of Jesus with the "Excellencies" of Siddhartha and mark the similarity:

Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit [the humble], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Siddhartha says: "To serve the wise and not the foolish, and to honor those worthy of honor: these are excellencies."

Jesus: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Siddhartha: "To dwell in the neighborhood of the good, to bear the remembrance of good deeds, and to have a soul filled with right desires: these are excellencies."

Jesus: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Siddhartha: "To be charitable, to act virtuously, to honor father and mother, to be helpful to relations, and to lead a blameless life: these are excellencies."

Jesus: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Siddhartha: "To have a mind unshaken by prosperity, inaccessible to sorrow, secure and tranquil; to be pure, temperate, and persevering in good deeds: these are excellencies."

It is manifest that the trend and essence of these teachings are identical, although expressed in language so diverse.

Inasmuch as the ethical doctrines of Siddhartha and Jesus are identical, why is there so vast a gulf of separation between the Christian and the Buddhistic religions? It is apparent that there must be another cause than any essential discrepancies between the original teachings of their respective founders.

Just at this juncture it would be *apropos* to emphasize one indisputable historic fact: Differences between ethical precepts have never given rise to fiercely antagonistic and mutually destructive schools. The schools of the ancient pagan philosophers, though widely divergent both in method and subject-matter, were never bent upon each other's overthrow. The Academician and the Peripatetic stood side by side with the philosophers of the "Porch" and the "Grove." Socrates was incontinently opposed to the so-called Sophists of his day—but the result of his teachings was not exhibited in persecution and destruction. True, his own fate indicates what spirit might have pervailed if intolerance had become universal and the less popular schools had assumed the autocratic methods of the pharisaical Sophists. But his fate was exceptional, even in those ancient days of supposed uncivilization. Says Gibbon:

"The studies of philosophy and eloquence are congenial to a popular state, which encourages the freedom of inquiry and submits only to the force of persuasion. . . . In the Republics of Greece and Rome . . . the systems which professed to unfold the nature of God, of man, and the universe, entertained the curiosity of the philosophic

student; and according to the temper of his mind, he might doubt with the Sceptics, or decide with the Stoics, sublimely speculate with Plato, or severely argue with Aristotle. . . . It is remarkable that the impartial favor of the Antonines was bestowed on the four adverse sects of philosophy, which they considered as equally useful, or, at least, as equally innocent. Socrates had been the glory and reproach of his country; and the first lessons of Epicurus so strangely scandalized the pious ears of the Athenians that by his exile they silenced all vain disputes concerning the nature of the gods. But in the ensuing year they recalled the hasty decree, restored the liberty of the schools, and were convinced . . . that the moral character of philosophers is not affected by the diversity of their theological speculations."

Had Calvin been as wise, the disgraceful taking off of poor Servetus had been spared to history and her pages had not been stained with the blood of sacrificial victims.

But still more vividly is the fact we are seeking to emphasize illustrated by the fate that befell the expiring schools of pagan philosophy in the reign of Justinian, under the frown and curse of the Church's towering authority, when she seized the mace of political power and beat into silence the last voice of that ancient music that once thrilled the world. Among themselves the schools of philosophy had no quarrel, nor did they pick one with the outer world. They sought quietly to contemplate wisdom and truth in the realm of peaceful meditation. But when the *odium theologicum* was

directed against them, then fell their ancient glory and their world-wide usefulness.

What peculiar element, then, obtruded itself upon the Christian religion, or more especially upon modern Christianity, to arouse within it a sinister, vicious, and embittering disposition, which has strewn the earth with the calamities of internecine war and long held in check the natural progress of the race? It is evident, from this review of facts, that such a result cannot be attributed to the spirit or the methods of mere philosophy or the inculcation of ethical precepts. These seem not to arouse that insatiable appetite for authority and arrogance that has ever been exhibited in the history of religious institutions so soon as they have attained a sufficient and commanding growth. Nor can it be attributed to the original spirit that engendered the religious system of modern Christianity—for that was as tender and pure and sweet and ennobling as any that ever throbbed upon inspired lips.

So long as the Christian religion maintained the primitive spirit and methods of its exalted Founder, she had never cause to blush for her transactions. So long as religion was regarded as something divine, to be nurtured with devout attention—as a power that would repay devotion with purification, and sacrifice with spiritual exaltation—no martial tocsin was ever sounded in her defence; no drop of blood was ever shed for her glorification; no streak of shame, in her behalf, ever crimsoned the cheek of man. But there came a time when the religion of Jesus was no longer like its "meek and lowly" Founder—as humble as a child and as pure as a

saint. It was transformed into a pompous and blatant hypocrite; its diction was fustian pedantry, its teaching arrant nonsense, and its influence degenerating and damning. Thenceforth it ceased to be an inspiration to conscientiousness, veracity, and spiritual piety, and became the sword of the theologian and the crux of the casuist.

So long as religion maintained itself as a bond of unity between men—an inspiration to noble living and social amelioration—it was as welcome as the dew falling on the parched grass, or as a cool stream to the lips of the famished traveller. Never would the voice of revolt have been raised against her had she but continued to wear her plain and simple garb. But when, puffed up with self-conscious superciliousness, she imposed upon the race the unequivocal acceptation of her authority in the interpretation of an indefinable Deity—opening, on one hand, a slight aperture into a narrow heaven, through which she would guide the few that she chose to save, and, on the other, a vast pit, bursting with sulphurous fumes, which she had prepared as the final doom for the majority of men—she aroused the suspicion of mankind and transformed the suppliant slave into an unconquerable insurgent, who has ever since bombarded her strongest fortifications.

None can gainsay the attractiveness of pure and simple religion untainted by the wilful perversions of ignorant expounders or mercenary venders. As such she blesses humanity as the sun and the air bless the flowers of the field and instil in them their native sweetness. But religion will never free and redeem the human race until she is divorced from

an austere and ignorant theology that was conceived in iniquity and brought forth in sin.

Let us, then, examine the second word that is germane to this discussion. *Theology*—from two Greek words meaning to discourse about God — is defined as the science of religion. Simple, natural theology—a scientific study of the laws that relate to the spiritual experiences of the race—may ever be a legitimate and valuable pursuit. But ecclesiastical theology is of a totally different quality from that which might justly be included in a curriculum of scientific investigations.

Originally, in the Christian Church, all theology was treated from the naturalistic standpoint—was discussed, accepted, or rejected, without fear of authority or dread of ostracism. But since the days of Peter Abelard, in the twelfth century, the uses of theology as a legitimate science have been distorted into the authoritative, doctrinal interpretations of so-called revealed religion. Since his day the theology on which the Church insists—belief in which all the creeds demand in order to the salvation of the soul—has been called " revealed theology." This phase of the " divine science " is not only distinctively Christian, but is also of mediævalistic origin. For the ancient Greeks knew of no such theology, nor did the primitive Christian fathers.

The theology of the early Church was really but a Christianization of the ancient pagan philosophy, which, however, laid no emphasis upon its superhuman or extra-natural origination. The early fathers sought to explain the phenomena of the spiritual experiences disclosed in the Bible and in

the history of the Church on a scientific basis, as well as that far-off age would permit. Indeed, those early fathers — Polycarp, Irenæus, Papias, Lactantius, Origen, and even Tertullian—did not pretend to expound a theological system, nor did any one church adhere unqualifiably to a distinctive or authoritative interpretation of the Bible or the formulæ of faith. These fathers were rather mere historians, who set forth the principles and phenomena of life and conduct as taught by the Savior, without intending to demand submission to the interpretations they propounded.

In those days there were no theological deliverances, *ex cathedra;* no heretics; no excommunications. "No system of schools, no scholastic formula, can be drawn from the simple documents that represent primitive Christianity." Had theology been content to remain within such confines, its breast had never been stained with fratricidal blood—neither had the dark shadow of its authority settled like a pall upon the earth.

But when Abelard fought valiantly for a freer interpretation of theology, which had been by slow accretions fastened upon the Church, he aroused the first triumphant protagonist of the faith in Bernard of Clairvaux, whose intensely dogmatic arrogance was singularly inconsistent with his tender heart and exalted life. Abelard was the first reformer, antedating Luther and the Reformationists by several centuries; and his fate prophesied the doom of the free-thinker, when the inauspicious reign of a triumphant hierarchy would be established in the name of Revealed Religion.

From that day religion has been prostituted and compelled to become the passive servant of sciolists and scholastic jugglers. Belief in set doctrines has been paramount to simple honor and engaging purity. Nor has simple faith in Jesus been sufficient to transpose a soul from the gloom of hell to the glories of heaven. The nature and the characteristics of that faith must needs be analyzed: whether it be faith in him as a man or as God; faith in his ethical precepts or in the distorted interpretation of his spiritual biology which a perverse Church has foisted on the race; faith in the inspiration that his matchless life afforded to holier living and sturdier character, or in the efficiency of his sacrificial blood to rescue believers from the doom of eternal perdition.

Ecclesiastical theology deals not with the evolution of religious experience in mankind, but with the metaphysical doctrines of the vicarious atonement, the nature and person of Jesus Christ, the Holy Trinity, and eternal damnation or salvation. Every one of these doctrines has been imposed upon the race by the arbitrament of war and sealed by the spilled blood of human sacrifices. Such doctrines are vacuous explanations of things inexplicable. So long as they are forced upon the unwilling attention of the race by the terrors of everlasting excommunication, they cause men to neglect the study of their practical and utilitarian relations.

Religion must be divorced from a domineering, procrustean theology, and become the handmaid of a scientific and correct anthropology. Man's duty is to man. Man's relationship is with his fellow-

creatures. Man is necessarily limited to human consciousness. Only as he acquaints himself with *man* can he know the universe; for the universe is registered in his self-conscious experience. Therefore, only as man learns man can he know God; for there is no knowledge of God beyond the knowledge of man. "Man, know thyself!" is a command to know God; for only as God is revealed in the consciousness of man is there any revelation of God. Hence, that is the truest theology which best acquaints man with himself. That is the truest religion which best enables man to approach nearest to his loftiest ideal.

Anthropology, therefore, is the real and only theology—for it may be scientifically apprehended and expounded. It deals with realities, not fantastic figments. It deals with a Deity discoverable, not with one beyond the search of science and the experience of the soul. Such a science is the strength and sustenance of pure religion. Theology transformed into anthropology is truly a revelation writ in the holy scriptures of the human heart.

The religion that shall be universal, and draw within its folds the aspiring among the nations of the earth, will be neither Christian, nor Jewish, nor Mohammedan — neither Buddhistic nor Vedantic. But it will be that religion which, like a bee busy among the flowers, sucks from the heart of each the essence of its sweetness and its life. But no theology that perforce must hoist some standard of authority will ever, as such, conquer the race in the name of religion. The latter is a force in the human heart that tends to perfect the race. The

former is fatuous speculation, repulsive ostentation, and fustian pedantry.

Religion is an appeal to pure imagination and lofty idealism: theology browbeats the mind and stultifies the heart. Religion nurses, loves, and rescues: theology stabs, wounds, and slays. Religion says, "I persuade": theology thunders, "I command!" Religion sings its hope: theology grumbles with despair and death. Theology beglooms heaven with the portentous shadow of hell: religion, like the sun, spreads her beams of warmth so far and wide she penetrates even the stygian depths and carries on her bosom the burden of the dead. Religion is Orpheus, who fears not hell nor all its horrors, can he but rescue his fond Eurydice: theology is Pluto, who so mingles hope with temptation that he makes rescue impossible even for one so brave and true as the fabled hero. Religion unyoked from presumptuous theology ever has been and ever will be a benediction to the race; but theology, like a messenger from perdition liveried in the robes of heaven, has ever, like Satan, lured the race to illusion and destruction.

To follow that religion that leads to truth, purity, and love, despite dogmatic traditionalism or presumptive supernaturalism, is an instinct of the heart, obedience to which can lead but to happiness and perennial peace.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TWILIGHT OF THE PAST

ONE of the saddest facts of history is the demoralization of human ideals. All great truths have at first come into the world with a blaze of glory. They have stood out clear and defined as the silver moon on a frosty night. Their splendor has, for the time being, out-dazzled all subordinate and antiquated conceptions, as the noonday sun mantles the lesser lights within the folds of his effulgence. But ere long their glory wanes and dim becomes their splendor. As the sun is sometimes screened behind the darkening clouds, and of his brilliance naught remains but refracted beams of broken light, so the once luminous inspirations of the race disappear in dim and misty symbols.

Nowhere else is this fact so well illustrated as in the history and teaching of Jesus Christ. To appreciate this let us sketch in a few words, and with a hasty outline, the features of this great career. Two thousand years ago a young man, who was destined not to outlive the average longevity of the race, appeared upon the scenes of Galilee and Palestine.

He was a rapt student of the problem of life. He conceived a philosophy. He was swept on by an inspiration which compelled him to live anomalously, till he was driven to preach to his fellow-men and acquaint them with his overwhelming convictions. He was indeed an enthusiast. Nay, he was not only an enthusiast, but a fanatic; yet fanatics have been the inspiration of every age.

But a comparatively few men have aroused the world from periodic lethargy. The history of the race is chiefly the biography of individuals. The fanatic is an extremist; for extremes are necessary, that the sluggish human mind may be carried, for the moment, far beyond its normal tension, in order that it may sustain a wider, freer oscillation when it re-establishes its equilibrium.

Christ was a fanatic; for his soul was afire with conviction, as his heart was aflame with love, and his mind luminous with inspiration. And yet, withal, he was the embodiment of gentleness, the incarnation of optimism, the paragon of purity. All his works were for good, all his thoughts for truth. Wherever there was human want, there was he.

Follow his weary footsteps through the plains of Galilee, by the waters of Genesareth, under the shades of Olivet, within the gloom of the Sanhedrim, in the twilight of Gethsemane, on the *via dolorosa* to Golgotha, and you pursue the shadow of a sad but honest man; a zealot, but a hero. Harshness seldom escaped his lips, howbeit he was but a human being—for we exalt him not as God or a supernatural divinity. He had his weaknesses, his failings, his errors in judgment and in act; yet he

stands forth in the perspective of history the most exalted of all characters, illumining the atmosphere of the race with the radiance of love and goodness.

Read the story of this life as given in the four records, then close the book and seize the picture which is left on your memory. You will behold a Man—the most noble, just, and good in all history, who alone has most nearly fulfilled the exact moral ideals of mankind. Of him more than any other character the poet well might sing:

"Once in the flight of ages past,
There lived a Man: and who was He?
. . . . . .

"He saw whatever thou hast seen;
Encountered all that troubles thee;
He was—whatever thou hast been;
He is—what thou shalt be.

"The annals of the human race,
Their ruins, since the world began,
Of *Him* afford no other trace
Than this: THERE LIVED A MAN!"

Written, as were these inspired lines of Montgomery, as an interpretation of Man—the race—there is perhaps in all history but one individual life to which they can literally apply. And yet we marvel when, as the ages fly, this once idealized conception of gentleness, mercy, and love, descends into an incarnation of demonism, such as he became in the stern and repulsive symbols of the Middle Ages.

But, let us inquire, what was the force, political,

theological, or social, which caused the deformation and distortion of this once glorified ideal? There is a startling fact in the evolution of Christian thought which has not been sufficiently emphasized by either sacred or profane historians. It is this: So long as the ancient Greek and Roman notions concerning Jesus prevailed among the Christians, he was portrayed in the exalted and ennobling ideals of the primitive symbols which have ever been the inspiration of the race. But so soon as Christianity entered into another sphere of influence and conceived a *sui generis* Jesus—a Jesus of the skies but not of the earth; a Jesus carved out of cold intellectual fancy, a mere divinity without a touch of human feeling—then he became the incarnation of the Judgment, the emblem of barbarism, the embodiment of terror.

If we would know the primitive conception of Jesus, we must study the musty walls of the Catacombs, which still preserve the symbols of antiquity. In all ages the history and evolution of religion have been evidenced in the artist's brush and on the living canvas.

So, to become acquainted with the evolution of Christian thought concerning Jesus, we must study the development of ecclesiastical art and architecture. Now the Catacombs contain the first art gallery of Chrisianity, because its primitive votaries, in the early days of persecution under the Roman Empire, sought refuge in concealment beneath the surface of the earth. Let us turn then to the walls of the Catacombs for information. We shall learn how prevalent, how exclusive, were the pagan, or

Greek and Roman, notions of Jesus among the early Christians.

You will find Jesus here portrayed as a shepherd, bearing in his arms the lost and wandering lamb. It has been commonly supposed that this picture was inspired by the Bible parable which relates the incident; we need, however, but turn to the picture of Hermes, the Egyptian deity, which is to be found in the ancient temples, and there behold this sturdy god carrying on his shoulders the burden of a little calf, to discover the natural origin of the Christian symbol, as painted in the Catacomb galleries. We can still further detect the Greek or pagan influence of thought in the minds of the primitive Christians by the fact that their pictures never portrayed scenes of gloom and suffering, or evil and despair. The ancient mythology sprung from the sun-clad heights of Olympus, and was mirrored on the ever-radiant bosom of the Ægean atmosphere, whose zephyrs swept the chords of Æolian lyres, and carried perennial incense on their wings.

It was the mythology that inspired good cheer, hope, and courage, as it drank in these inspirations from an atmosphere of light and love. So long as this mythology prevailed and was incorporated in Christian thought, so long the conceptions of the Church were optimistic, cheerful, and full of light.

Says Lecky: "There was no disposition to perpetuate forms of suffering, no ebullition of bitterness or complaint, no thirsting for vengeance. Neither the crucifixion nor any of the scenes of the Passion were ever represented; nor was the Day of Judg-

ment, nor were the sufferings of the Lost. The wreaths of flowers in which paganism delighted, and even some of the most joyous images of pagan mythology, were still retained, and mingled with all the most beautiful emblems of Christian hopes, and with representations of many of the miracles of mercy" (vol. i., p. 212).

Why then were these conceptions ever changed? Why did the brow of Jesus become formidable as the front of Jove? Why did his smile change into a scowl, his youthful brow wrinkle with a frown? Why did that face, once so placid, those lips that once lisped only love, those hands that once ministered naught but mercies, become objects of horror? Why did those lips fulminate with curses; those hands wield a sceptre of death, that face terrify with flames of anger, which shot like bolts of thunder upon the victims of his curse? Why did this gentle *Savior* become a terrible *Destroyer;* why this good *Shepherd*, a saturnine *Judge*, seated on an unapproachable throne; why the "Man of sorrows," "touched with the feeling of our infirmities and tempted in all points like as we are," become a kingly tyrant who sat in the heavens and laughed at the confusion of his enemies? Yet all those transformations actually occurred. Nor is it difficult to trace the cause.

Let us ask when did these transformations in Christians symbols begin? History replies, about the sixth century. When the revolutionary and repulsive theology is in full control, they reach the climax of their revolting characteristics.

But the sixth century was ushered in by the

momentous crash of the Roman Empire, which fell under the merciless blows of the Scythian barbarians who were then conquering the world.

As the theology of the primitive Church was complexioned by the mythology of Greece and Rome, so was the theology of the Middle Ages colored by the gloomy tints of the mythology of the frigid North. It is from Scandinavia, from ancient Teutonia, whence all those doctrines of gloom, terror, punishment, evil, and endless torment crept into Christian theology. Those were the people who dreamed of the land of the Cimmerians; of the dark abode of Loki; of the gloom of Walhalla; and of the wanderings of lost souls who were hurled into the everlasting flame.

It is not difficult to find the natural origin of such conceptions. These people lived on the borders of the great Germanic iron-wood, that vast forest within whose bosom dwelt the everlasting night; out of whose torturing gloom arose all the sinister powers which inflicted pain and woe upon them. Periodically they beheld the heavens split with gigantic tongues of flame, which pierced the gloom with sharper edge than the lightning's flash, and seemed, in truth, to consume the entire world in quenchless fire. Imagine what visions of terror the resplendent revelations of the Aurora Borealis must have awakened in the mind of the primitive savage!

From such natural surroundings sprung the theology of gloom, torture, evil, pessimism, and eternal death. Here mediæval Christianity found its inspiration; here orthodoxy acquired its complexion. Then vanished the bright ideals of the Grecian lore,

incorporated in the early emblems; and in their stead uprose the monsters of the gloom — devils, death's heads, vast holes in earth through which bubbled forth the flames of sulphur, into which were hurled legions of struggling, shrieking, burning mortals. The bright vision of the skies had vanished; the Cimmerian gloom of hell o'er-shadowed all.

Before the invention of printing, painting was the faithful reflection of the thought and ideal of each age; the unfailing mirror of the popular mind. We shall see how faithfully it reflected the sepulchral theology of the Middle Ages.

In his *History of Rationalism* Lecky thus remarks upon the meaning and evolution of painting as reflecting theology:

"This systematic exclusion of all images of sorrow, suffering, and vengeance, at a time that seemed beyond all others most calculated to produce them, reveals the early Church in an aspect that is singularly touching, and it may, I think, be added, singularly sublime. The fact is also one of extreme importance in ecclesiastical history. For, as we shall hereafter have occasion to see, there existed among some of the theologians of the early Church a tendency that was diametrically opposite to this; a tendency to dilate upon such subjects as the torments of hell, the vengeance of the Day of Judgment, and, in a word, all the sterner portions of Christianity, which at last became dominant in the Church, and which exercised an extremely injurious influence over the affections of men. But whatever might have been the case with educated theologians,

it was quite impossible for this tendency to be very general as long as art, which was then the expression of popular realizations, took a different direction. The change in art was not fully shown till late in the tenth century. I have already had occasion to notice the popularity which representations of the Passion and of the Day of Judgment then for the first time assumed; and it may be added that, from this period, one of the main objects of the artists was the invention of new and horrible tortures, which were presented to the constant contemplation of the faithful in countless pictures of the sufferings of the martyrs on earth, or of the lost in hell" (vol. i., pp. 212, 213).

It will be observed that Lecky indicates the fact that the germ of this gloomy theology—the prevalent tinge of orthodoxy — already existed in the earlier ages of the Church, but did not find full expression in the popular air till about the beginning of the eleventh century. But it was at this very period of the world's history that theology assumed a rigorous and dogmatic form, cramping the intellect, narrowing the scope of investigation, and deadening the scientific instinct.

Previous to the Middle Ages there existed no theology which could be said to be dogmatic or orthodox. The early Church, indeed the entire Church before the fall of the Empire, possessed no fixed, unchangeable, and absolutely authoritative system of theology. As I have shown in the earlier chapters of this work, there was universal freedom of thought in primitve Christianity, and a disposition to mutual toleration between different sects. But

during those long epochs of ignorance, known as the Dark Ages, a change came upon the face of the entire world; and where formerly freedom existed, slavery was established; where tolerance, persecution; where progress, retrogression.

Not until the intellectual world returned once more to the ancient Greek and Roman ideals, to those symbols of paganism which a rude Christianity had once so ruthlessly shattered, was freedom again restored to men, or did Christianity arise from the spell of mediæval gloom which so long oppressed it.

About the thirteenth century the fine light of the new Age-to-be, into whose glory we ourselves are but just entering, began to dawn upon the earth. This is the beginning of what is known as the Renaissance. The age of the revival of learning meant the return to the intellectual emblems and ideals of a pagan antiquity. It meant the return of love and light, good cheer and hope, progress and intellectual inspiration, for the race. But above all, it meant the return of the ideal of Freedom, so long nurtured on the Ægean and the Adriatic, to the dull and narrowed vision of mediæval Christianity. The Renaissance is the "attainment of the conscious spirit of human freedom manifested in the human race."

But it must not be forgotten that the emblems and symbols of orthodoxy were all established during the dark epoch of ignorance known as the Middle Ages. Orthodoxy first of all meant slavery; for it fixed a standard of thought to which the human mind must bow. Not until the powers of the Church became centralized in some potent

authority could such theological standards be established. Not till Rome became the Primary, and the recognized representative of God on earth was true orthodoxy possible. Not till a council could edit decrees and establish creeds, before which all minor authorities and individuals must bow, could there be such a system as that of orthodoxy.

The claim of orthodoxy in modern Protestantism is absurd. The standards have so often changed, the authority so often transferred from heresy to orthodoxy, that no single creed has a just claim to authority on the score of its orthodox privilege. The only authority in Christendom, rightly so called, is that of Roman Catholicism, and the Church of the East.

These alone have never changed their standards, but have remained fixed as the immovable mountains. There has always existed in Catholicism the one essential requisite of all orthodoxy—an Infallible Power to which to appeal, and whose decision was final.

In Protestantism such a Power does not, and in the nature of things never can, exist. Therefore there can be no authority that is final; hence, no orthodoxy. This is evidenced in the history of Protestantism. Luther was himself the great heretic of his day. His chief insistance was the claim of individual freedom and the right of private judgment in matters of religion. He denied the right of the Church to fix the interpretation of the Bible, and he even denied the infallible authority of the Bible canon as fixed or final. A greater heresy could not have existed than this. Yet soon after

John Calvin arises, who established the only phase of Protestant theology which may justly be declared to be orthodox.

It is the only consistent, logical, and systematic presentation that Protestantism ever gave of its theology. Yet Calvin's orthodox Protestantism is practically Martin Luther's scepticism, or heterodoxy, re-established in standard formulæ. In short, the heretic, Martin Luther becomes the orthodox, John Calvin.

Again, John Knox, the great nonconformist, broke from the authority of the Established Church, whose traditions were Romanistic, and whose authority was reactionary, and was pronounced the heretic of his day. He fled to the Scottish mountains and there established the Kirk of the Scots.

But the teachings of the heretic were fastened upon and incorporated in the theology of Jonathan Edwards and his New England coadjutors, who became the most stalwart of recognized orthodox leaders.

Thus, once more, we see the heretic, John Knox, transformed into the orthodox, Jonathan Edwards.

Was not Roger Williams persecuted as the most dangerous heretic of his day? And yet, are not his teachings incorporated in the orthodox standards of the modern Baptist Church, against which the voice of no orthodox dare to-day be raised.

And finally, John Wesley was forced out of the Anglican fellowship and driven to the wilds of America, to preach the gospel in which he believed, while the Methodists are now rearing a "church every day" to the honor and glory of his name.

And who shall dare say that Methodism is not orthodoxy? Nevertheless, it was reared on the sandy and shifting foundation of ostracized heresies.

It is therefore useless to insist that there exists among Protestants any form of faith which can be called orthodox. There is, however, a certain pseudo-orthodoxy, which may be assumed to be the orthodoxy of Protestantism, expressed in the nine articles of the Evangelical Alliance. They will at least constitute a basis of divergence for all who may choose to-day to be known as heretical.

Judged by this standard, though it be but a faint glimpse of such orthodoxy as is contained in the Westminster Confession, there are many occupants of modern pulpits who can cling to the name of orthodox only by an assertion of supreme assurance.

Judged by the sixth article of the standards adopted by the Evangelical Alliance, the orthodoxy of such preachers, for instance, as Dr. Lyman Abbott, the venerable successor of the immortal Beecher, might be justly called in question.

This article insists that there can be remission of sins to the sinner only by personal faith in Jesus Christ, as Mediator and Savior. But Dr. Abbott insists that even agnostics and sceptics may be saved, *nolens volens*, by a Deity who chooses to exercise the privilege of His arbitrary authority.

Such pseudo-orthodoxy borrows its clothes from the theological shops of mediævalism, and seeks to disport itself in our day in grotesque disguises.

Theology must be factual not fictional. It must be scientific, not agnostic.

To those who know the larger freedom of a faith

which is universal, the statement of Dr. Abbott that God may receive agnostics into His kingdom, even though they refuse to recognize Him, approaches the verge of the ridiculous.

Is, then, Dr. Abbott's God still so provincial that He occupies only a limited realm, access to which is secured merely by the *ipse dixit* of some Supreme Arbitrator? Does Dr. Abbott still adhere to the God of the Jews, who is a local Deity, saving only the children of the House of Israel; namely, those whose careers are acceptable to Him?

Dr. Abbott admits that his faith is large enough to permit him to believe that his God will accept agnostics in His heaven, on the score of their good lives, regardless of their intellectual beliefs.

But why does he pause there? Does not the good Doctor see that the logical conclusion of his own premises leads to the perception of a larger and more philosophical — not to say scientific — God, who is literally no respecter of persons, but is Himself the Power that makes for righteousness, and must somehow devise the final salvation of all mankind, just as cosmic harmony is evolved as the Ideal of the universe?

Dr. Abbott is apparently inconsistent in that he does not seem to dare to follow his premises to their legitimate sequence.

He admits the non-inspiration and fallibility of the Christian scriptures. He admits that faith is not essential to salvation, that character and not faith saves (for salvation consists only in the achievement of character). Yet he seems to deny that this achievement of character, or salvation, is a purely

natural process, subject alone to the laws of the universe, and that the God he postulates — the God of pseudo-orthodoxy — can be other than a Personal Deity, empowered with absolute authority.

If, then, the Bible be not inspired or infallible, on what ground can he prove, by the Bible, that the Personal God, or Absolute Dictator, whom he postulates, really exists? If He be not authentically revealed in the Bible, then His existence must be proved by Nature. Now, does Nature anywhere hint of such a God? How can the God of Nature be at once personal and infinite, limited and unlimited, absolute and variable? Dr. Abbott must either accept the God of the Bible, subject to the feelings, mental vicissitudes, and changeableness of human experience, or he must accept the God of Nature, who is evinced alone in persistent and uncontrollable law, which points to a final perfection and harmony, in which not only all mankind, but all the planetary spheres as well, must assuredly share.

Dr. Abbott still speaks of Heaven as though it were a locality, entrance into which is secured, as it were, by certain cards of admission. Or, he seems to regard it as a spiritual state, access to which is wholly dependent upon the arbitrary judgment of a Deity.

Where does Dr. Abbott find a support for such theology? He thinks he finds it in the Bible. But, if the Bible be not infallibly inspired, it is of course not infallible authority. Hence if reason compel us to reject its authority, we can but turn to Nature and learn whether she confirms such theology.

Nowhere in Nature can Dr. Abbott find even a hint of his assumed heaven, either as a locality or as a spiritual state. It is a pure myth evolved out of the teachings of that very Bible which he refuses to believe is other than a national literature or is infallibly informed.

Why then, as Dr. Abbott is not bound by the authority of the Bible, does he not bow to the infallible authority of Nature? He is on the right track, but still restricted to the limitations of the sacred desk and the prejudice of the Creed.

Freedom from creed can alone give mental freedom and logical thought. Reason and inward experience, which some call intuition, are our only guides.

Dr. Abbott's position is anomalous, and yet it illustrates how thoroughly honeycombed the so-called Protestant orthodoxy of the present day has become. No preacher in a metropolitan pulpit durst declare his belief in the repulsive doctrines of John Calvin. No preacher durst to-day assert in the face of intelligent listeners that God created a major portion of the human race in order to assign them to eternal damnation, according to His good and holy pleasure; or that the unborn infant is blighted in its mother's womb with the curse of eternal death, even before it has secured the probationary years of earthly existence.

Nevertheless, even such an advanced theological attitude as that of Dr. Abbott will seem crude when seen in the light of that future which some day will herald the culmination of human intelligence.

But the efforts of these pseudo-orthodox leaders

will never succeed in maintaining, not to say rehabilitating, the old standards.

Orthodoxy is dead, indeed, forever beyond resuscitation. It has gone chattering into the charnel-house of the past, as have gone the religions of Isis and Osiris, Jupiter and Juno, Apollo and Minerva, never again to be restored to rational authority.

And it is right that such orthodoxy should expire. That it has fulfilled its quota of good, none shall deny. For there is naught in nature, however evil its effects, but has filled some compartment of the universal economy and justified its existence. Although the existence of mediæval orthodoxy was a necessary evil, nevertheless a just war was waged against it and it was righteously slain. It was the enemy of progress, hope, and happiness. It rolled tremendous boulders in the path of human advancement and sought to stay the march of intellectual conquest. It swept the tide of science and philosophy, the arts and scholarship, backward a thousand years. It was the cruel cause of nameless wars. It fathered the Inquisition, abetted perjury, harbored corruption, and fostered political and social demoralization. It covered the earth with rivers of blood, shed in fratricidal war. It violated the chastity of woman and blasted the manhood of the race.

Nay, more, it disarranged the natural political conditions of earth, and, more than any other cause, brought about the vast separation between the opposite poles of society which we recognize to-day in social castes. It created a false heaven—the home of the fortunate few; and a false hell—the doom of the helpless masses. There were few born

to enjoy the luxuries of heaven; the horde were left to be trampled into hell.

It engendered the doctrine of the divine right of kings, and commanded millions to grovel in fear at their feet. And even to-day its vote is cast with the "chosen few." "Many are called but few are chosen." As but few of the teeming millions of earth constitute the heavenly elect, so there are but few here permitted to dwell in the social heaven. The modern social Aristocracy is as exclusive and orthodox as was the constituency of the mediæval heaven. The modern Proletariat is as prodigious and innumerable as was the population of Milton's bottomless perdition.

How grievously suggestive! How gruesomely prophetic! The rich are our social princes and princesses; the poor are our social slaves. The former are as the planets and fixed constellations—limited, brilliant, and predominant; the latter, vast as the ocean of innumerable worlds, lost in the misty depths of the Milky Way.

To-day orthodoxy is still responsible for most of our social upheavals and insurrections. It has per force of a false theology bound cords around the brow and shackles on the feet of that great giant, The People, who will some day cause the earth to quake, when he snaps his bonds and breaks for Freedom!

The only hope of religion lies in its complete relinquishment of orthodox mythology and metaphysical fiction, in order that it may once more mingle with the realities of earth and establish a practical philosophy for the uplift of humanity.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MARRIAGE OF REASON AND RELIGION

THE autocratic Church demands the stultification of the individual. It assumes that Truth has been once for all discovered and is sufficiently represented by her symbols. It insists that Truth is a revelation — not a discovery. The Church is the custodian; the individual is the pensioner. The individual has no rights of mind, of soul, either for ratiocination or spiritual aspiration, save those which the Church allows. She is the embodiment of authority. She is the absolute standard.

Within her confines unrestricted Reason is a traitor; its voice is treason. The individual must think within bounds; the Creed must not be offended; the standards must not be abrogated. Whoever subscribes to the Creed of the Church is a voluntary slave; he has signed away his mental freedom and beclouded his spiritual vision.

Such statements I am aware are startling to those who have possibly yielded, and have not yet sought the lofty heights of pure thought and unclouded intelligence. It is the misfortune of the Church that it assumes that creedal authority is

essential to its existence. They call the Creed the flesh and bones that clothe the spirit of faith. They insist that the spirit must be clothed else it cannot be discerned. They materialize the ethereal substance of faith and imprison the free spirit in darkened walls of clay. They laugh at the insinuations of a church without a creed. It is, they say, built on shifting sand — on falling rocks — smitten by the elements and washed by the waves. The Creed is the centre-pole that sustains the ecclesiastical tent: remove the centre-pole and the wind will shatter the canvas. The Creed is the expressed thought which stands forth as the embodied, tangible substance of the truth, without which truth would be deprived of a symbol to express it.

It does not require much imagination to see how by this reasoning the Creed will soon be exalted above truth, science, literature, and inspiration. Once bow to such authority and the mind cowers in fear, as the slave before the lash. Once submit to such declarations, *ex cathedra*, and you have forged the chains about your soul, for deliverance from which you must needs toil through many hells of suffering and pain. The proof of this lies in the universal experience of mankind—in the history of religious thought.

All great souls, all illuminated minds, have been forced to break the prison bars of established faith and seek freedom through the faggots of persecution and the flames of martyrdom. All the religions which have stirred mankind and become universal are those that sprung from the bosoms of liberated men, who for freedom's sake defied

existing powers, and submitted to persecution, defamation, and crucifixion.

Even in the dawn of civilization, when the gods yet reigned in Walhalla and on Olympus, the prophet voice that pointed out the path of truth and shouted for freedom was silenced by the stout axe of Thor or Jupiter's fierce thunder. In the misty mythology of the ancient Teutons, we behold a vague glimpse of this common experience of the race. In the legends of the Valkyrie, Brunhilde, the swan maiden, who may be regarded as the symbol of intuition,—the feminine Wisdom,—opposes Odhinn, the god of Power and Authority, ruler of Walhalla. He pierces her with his sword and she falls on sleep. Thus aspiring Wisdom has ever been broken and crushed by the crude force of error and conventionality. When Siegfried comes to awake her from her sleep in the deep hollow of the rock, she imparts to him her wisdom; and he, messenger of light and love, passes on through the vicissitudes of conflict, defeat, and triumph, as the personification of truth, traduced, villified, and pursued by the envious hounds of error and authority.

The same idea is presented in the myth of Prometheus; he who, bound to Caucasus and ever devoured by the insatiable vulture, is enduring his torture as punishment for intrusion upon the realms of heaven, from which he sought to bring down the living coals of wisdom to the paths of men. To steal wisdom from the gods, in those ancient times, was conceived to be the unpardonable sin.[1]

[1] "Because I gave
Honor to mortals, I have yoked my soul

In like manner the voice of authority has in all ages denounced the efforts of man to secure eternal wisdom from beyond the confines of established authority. Socrates, the divine philosopher, whose illuminated soul pierced through the murky clouds of his environment and discerned the truth through and beyond the superstition which then prevailed, was forced to drink the fatal hemlock and die the death of a criminal.

And yet, as the flower, crushed by the rude foot of the savage, emits upon the air the benediction of its fragrance, as if speaking forgiveness for the cruel deed, so the wisdom of the sage floated from his prison cell and permeated the atmosphere of the world's intelligence.

To this compelling fate. Because I stole
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles went
Over the ferrule's brim, and manward sent
Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,
That sin I expiate in this agony,
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky.

. . . . . .

" Do you also ask
What crime it is for which he tortures me?
That shall be also clear to you. When at first
He filled his father's throne, he instantly
Made various gifts of glory to the gods
And dealt the empire out. Alone of men,
Of miserable men, he took no count.

. . . . . .

" Not a god
Resisted such desire except myself.
I dared it. I drew mortals back to light,
From meditated ruin deep as hell!
For which wrong I am bent down in these pangs."

Æschylus: *Prometheus Bound.*
(Translation by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.)

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
Th' eternal years of God are hers:
But error, wounded, writhes in pain
And dies among his worshippers."

The Church herself is founded upon the revolt of the Jewish Christians, under the leadership of their great captain, from the authority of the Sanhedrim. The Pharisee and the Sadducee ruled the world of Jewish thought when Jesus came. His voice has conquered the earth because it smote with defiance the authority which sought to silence him and crush his spirit by the dark deed of the crucifixion. Christianism is the revolt of the free spirit of Truth from the harsh authority of the established Creed.

But the illustrations do not cease here, for modern Christianity is herself a house divided against itself, because Truth sought once more to part her lips and speak; but the cruel Creed interfered and smote her with anathema and execration.

Protestantism, under a Luther, a Fox, a Wesley —what is this but the revolt of truth from error, of freedom from authority? Yet to-day, the very voice that once spoke for freedom and self-liberation has become the voice of denunciation and enslavement.

Disreputable rebellion has been transformed into austere respectability and sits now in the place of authority and with the poise of dignity denounces spiritual uprising and revolt.

But the voice that spoke in Buddha and Socrates in Christ and Luther and Wesley speaks again to-day. It speaks with a clearer, firmer, honester

voice than ever in the world's history. It is impressed by the force of a new illumination, and cannot be downed by crown or crozier, by prince or prelate.

But what is Truth? Can it ever be discovered? Is it once for all revealed, or shall we know it only by vague glimpses? Here is the old, old question. The weakness of the human spirit and the illogical condition of the human mind are the excuse for creed and authority.

Because Truth is variable in her manifestations, because all cannot discern her alike, the credulous believer concludes it is given to a few only to discover her or to be befriended by her: and they must become her sponsors and custodians before whom the weaker must bow.

The Creed, therefore, as I have said, is the custodian of the Truth, the individual is the beggarly pensioner. But see how false; for Authority herself has never seen Truth with a single eye. To her, too, Truth has been as variable, in spite of *ipse-dixit* councils and *ex-cathedra* vaticans, as she has ever been to individuals, as indeed she must be to every honest searcher.

Who shall speak for Truth? What mirror perfectly reflects her? She employs no custodian. She empowers no authority. She exclaims not, as it were, to creed or code,

> "Shine out fair sun and be my glass,
> That I may see my shadow pass."

She holds no council or school responsible for her deliverance. She holds each individual alone

responsible ; and she reveals herself truly and perfectly alone to the individual. Every soul is her mirror; every heart the sensitive plate on which she photographs her figure. Ah, but you say, then Truth is never the same, and being undiscoverable in the absolute, is as uncertain as she is useless.

Let us see. How does it avail if I am told that that is truth which is not truth for me ? I gaze at the tree's shimmering foliage; my vision is not perfect. I cannot say whether the leaves be cordate or auriculate, serrate or sinuate. To my eye they appear as round or oval or elongated objects. But my companion sees more clearly. He describes in detail the outlines of the leaf, and assures me they are agreeable to his description. In this case, whom shall I believe, him or myself ? my own organs of vision or his ? At length the leaf is brought to us and we discover we were both in error, for its true nature was as neither discovered it.

The presentation of truth is always relative and wholly dependent upon the medium through which it is seen. This is as true of physical phenomena as of spiritual perceptions. *Revelation comes only to the individual.* He who sees Truth through the lens of his own experience perceives that truth which is essential to his happiness and welfare. It naught avails me if I am assured that that is truth which I cannot understand or realize. Plato taught that there were certain categories, certain ultimate truths, which come to man *a priori;* which were written eternally upon the human soul and slowly revealed themselves as the spirit of life evolved.

All men must perceive these truths because they

were indestructible and axiomatic; beyond the possibility of demonstration yet certain. He finally concludes that the conception of a God is one of the universal truths, ineradicable from the human mind, and universally perceived.

But modern philosophers tell us that there are no such ineradicable, *a priori* truths, or ideas, inherent in the human mind. They say all truths, all knowledge, all instincts and intuitions are but growths which have evolved through the age-long experience of the race, and have finally in our time effloresced in the larger knowledge which we have acquired.

Now who is right, Plato or Spencer? Who shall say? Each has firm ground on which to rest, and each draws his conclusions from vast research.

But every man who thinks must decide for himself which is right; if such a decision can be reached by any. If Plato be right, then God is self-revealed to the individual as a necessary and ineradicable truth. If Spencer and Mill are right, then the conceptions of ultimate truth, of a First Cause, of an eternal God, are simply impressions which have resulted from accidental experiences; and it is conceivable that had our experiences been different or contrary, contrary results would have followed.

Now, between these two schools of thought the individual is driven from pillar to post. Let us assume we take sides—I am a Platonist, you a Spencerian,—I a spiritualist, you a materialist. We have built our structures, we have laid well the firm foundations. Now, the logic of authority demands that one having decided, it becomes one's duty to abide

by the decision. The two opposing fortresses must now bombard each other; each claimant insisting he alone defends the formidable fortress of the truth.

If I must decide between these two schools, I can decide only according to my own predilections. The inward wisdom of my soul must dictate my course. I must perceive through my own mind whether Plato or Spencer be right or wrong—after I have traversed the ground of dispute. If I am convinced that Plato is right, I am false and hypocritical if I side with Spencer. If I am incapable of deciding, if I cannot perceive the truth, then I must let it alone. I must not swear allegiance to either banner.

But the Church and the Creed assume that unless we decide for her against all science, discovery, intuition, and self-conviction, we are eternally lost and our names cannot be written in the book of life.

He who is honest with himself need never fear. Is not all the universe poised in harmony? If one star were false to its orbit, to the minutest fraction of an inch, the universe would be resolved into primary atoms. Must not, then, the individual be in harmony with himself as well as with the universe? If physically out of harmony with the laws of your environment, you are diseased—sick. If mentally out of harmony with yourself, you are distracted or demented. *You cannot with your brain conceive the truth and with your heart believe the contrary.* Your head and heart must beat in harmony—must hear the strains symphonious that float from orchestrations of the truth, where not a note is false, and not one accent lost.

The individual is, therefore, self-responsible only, for he holds within himself the measure of his own responsibility. He is master of his heart—his conscience. He knows if these give him peace, he is right; if they bring torment, he is wrong. The whole trouble is, his head and heart are trying to pull apart; like two recalcitrant steeds yoked together, they are struggling to pull in the opposite direction.

There are only two great guides and laws in life:

First, KNOW THYSELF.

Second, TRUST THYSELF.

How, then, let me ask, can I know myself? Does any one exist in all the universe who can reveal me to myself? Can even God Himself discover me to myself? What is self-knowledge? Is it more than the knowledge of experience and the conscious judgments that flow from such experiences? Mark the growth of the child. Slowly out of the realm of the unconscious he gathers in the grasp of experience the threads of knowledge which finally construct the fabric of his self-consciousness. At first the child cannot distinguish between the candle-flame and the tip of his fingers; he knows nothing of distance or extension. The farthest objects are as near to him as the closest. The moon is close to his eye, not in the heavens. He reaches out and vainly attempts to touch it with his finger-tips. Slowly he learns to contradistinguish between his senses and the things which his senses apprehend. Little by little the world without separates from the world within. Soon the infant begins to understand that the flaring gas jet which so fascinated him is some distance removed

from his eye—he must reach out to approach it—it is not a part of himself—it is a revelation of another sphere of being. Then comes the wondrous transformation. Out of the infantile world of primary unity, the whole being residing in the semi-consciousness of the child, slowly develops the world of separation, discreteness, relation, and infinity. Then as age and experience develop the consciousness of the child, now attained to maturity, he again recedes from the outer world and realizes that all knowledge of the external is but the apprehension of inward spiritual experiences which he himself is capable of analyzing and even again separating from the inward unity of his real and indivisible self.

Gradually knowledge has evolved from the plane of ignorance to that of inchoate perception, and finally to self-realization. When the latter plane is attained, then first the child begins to have glimpses of his true self and to apprehend that knowledge which is his own, the result and product of his own experience, and which must necessarily be complexioned by the colorings of his own individuality.

For within the depths of his being he enters the Holy of Holies—of realization. In the secret centre of being he first becomes acquainted with his true self. Here he learns that knowledge is not what the world has taught him—not what authority has imposed—not what other minds seek to inculcate; but what his own suffering and deep-seated experiences have evolved as the demonstrations of law, reality, and truth. Here at last he approaches the throne of the Eternal and beholds seated thereon, crowned with the thorns of human mockery and bleeding at

every pore with the wounds of earthly affliction, the glorious figure of Eternal Wisdom, who smiles upon him through her tears and indites immortal laws with the blood of her own crucifixion. Then the fully developed and self-realizing man, in humility, bows in the presence of the truth and hears what overwhelms him with unutterable suffering and confusion. For the voice of Wisdom cries:

> Thou only knowest eternal Truth,
> Who dost discern, from callow youth
> To age's hoary locks,
> That none for thee the secret finds,
> None thine immortal conscience binds ;—
> *At thine own heart she knocks.*

When man perceives this law of knowledge, obedience to self-discovered truth becomes his law of life. It matters not to him then what message any of the world's greatest teachers may have delivered to a hungering world. All these are naught to him save as they appeal to his necessity and understanding: then they unveil for him a new and wondrous world. There lies within the secret depths of every human soul a realm of unimagined power for him to explore. None needs appeal to Church or creed, to philosopher or prelate, for the knowledge he must needs learn.

We are, indeed, all narrow creatures, because we have forced ourselves to believe that the search after truth is fraught with danger, and safety lies on the side of dependence. No Avatar has ever yet come for the world's deliverance who could teach even the humblest of the earth aught which he himself could

not have first discovered. Seek not to learn, but rather to discover. Beg not for the pearls of truth which another has found, but thyself delve into the deep, and by thine own temerity seize the prize from the fathomless depths. This is riches! This is glory!

But if we must learn from others, then let us learn first of all to doubt the verity of all. *Doubt, not Faith, is the Redeemer of the Race.* By doubt ye are saved; not by grace. Grace is the ointment of deception that blinds the eye of sincerity. Faith is spiritual strabismus which distorts the soul's clear vision. What teacher has ever yet existed who has safely led the race to the goal of wisdom unalloyed? None has yet taught who has not finally led the world astray. For every truth which each has uttered out of the discovery of his own soul's experience, being unappreciated and misapprehended by the masses, has been perverted and at last led to moral retrogression and the world's benighting.

Mark the effect of all the great teachers' efforts. Each sees Truth as it has been revealed to him in the Holy of Holies of his being; thence comes he to a coarse and sublunary world to reveal what he has discerned in the spiritual empyrean.

Recklessly he scatters his pearls of wisdom, and madly the hungry masses pursue and struggle for possession. But ere long they tire of pursuit and the rich boon weighs heavily in their hands. What has he given them? Wherein is found the value of these priceless gems? None can say. Each in ignorance appeals to the other to explain the mysterious virtue of the heaven-born favor. One rises who, in honesty or by pretension, asserts he has de-

ciphered the mystic meaning of the gift and can explain the occult wonder to the world. Then to his standard flock the unwary and unwise, the weak in mind and weary of heart. They listen with parted lips and thirsty hearts for his deliverances.

With shouts of approval they receive his revelation and anon erect temples and monuments to his glory. Not content that they themselves have learned and are satisfied, they must needs correct and conquer others. Thence come sectaries and dogmatists, proselyters and deceivers. Thence has authority been crowned with power, and upon all who will not obey must fall the curse of anathema and Gehenna.

Faith is supreme — the blind alone are saved! "Come unto me," exclaims the leader, "all ye who see not and are deaf. I will teach, and ye shall both see and hear. But hearken! if ye be stiff-necked and obstinate, the bolts of Jupiter are mine, and I have power to hurl them wheresoever I choose!" And thus the childlike Jesus, whose love was without flaw or falsehood, must needs behold himself transformed from the gentle lamb of early discipleship, into the austere judge of thunderous theology, whose voice is tremulous with woe, whose words are fearful as the fumes of hell.

The authority of the creed is the crown of thorns which has pressed its vicious prongs into the brow of the bleeding Savior. He crucifies the Lord of Truth who nails to the cross of fear his honest doubt; for Love, like the Arimathean Joseph, will steal away the bleeding corpse and transmute it into living truth when it has risen from the grave of

suffering and seized the crown of knowledge, in spite of death and hell. Therefore

TRUST THYSELF.

If thou hast discovered a truth within thyself at which all the world laughs, trust that truth, trust thyself, in spite of the universe.

All discoveries have been at first laughed down in every field of investigation. Harvey was declared a lunatic because he perceived the circulation of the blood and undertook to convince an obstinate and perverse generation. Cyrus Field was ignored by almost every scientist when he undertook to prove the possibility of laying a telegraphic cable under the Atlantic Ocean. It is amusingly narrated that a distinguished mathematician was demonstrating to a conference of his scientific confrères the absolute impossibility of such an achievement at the very time that Field was proving its practical possibility by fastening the cable in the watery depths.

It is well known that Morse, the discoverer of electrical telegraphy, was laughed to scorn by the scientific world, and at first besought Congress in vain for financial assistance.

Human nature does not display its obstinacy and ignorance alone in the Church, but in every field of life where authority is in vogue. Therefore they are the true leaders, who, self-reliant and independent, search the depths of their own beings for the philosopher's mysterious stone and the Ultima Thule of all knowledge.

The triumph of truth is the freedom of the individual. When resolutely we absolve ourselves from the sensible world and enter serenely behind

the portals of the inner being, first do we become ourselves and fit candidates for admission into the temple of the Higher Truth. Every soul is unconsciously in touch with the deepest secrets of nature. Each of us possesses latent powers of which we have never dared to dream.

When we realize that we are enswathed by the impalpable but all-pervasive substance which connects us with the stars, which is thrilled by our every impulse, penetrated by every wave of thought emanating from our brains, we understand how the universe is essentially one, and if we but come into unison with the harmonious forces that prevail, all things can be ours for the asking.

But, some will ask, is there to be no standard of truth whatever, no authority to which to appeal? So enslaved to the idea of necessary authority is the human mind that many even of our disenthralled philosophers are still fearful of the revolt of the individual. Some say there must be authority, but not of the traditional mould. It must be modern, clothed with scientific wisdom, and in line with progress; still, none the less, authority.

It is suggested that we establish a sort of Philosophic Academy, and relegate to the consensus of opinion among the learned and erudite the judgment of the individual. That when a consensus of opinion among the very learned and unprejudiced is attained, it shall be taken for granted that they have discovered the truth, and to that opinion we must needs all submit.

Some of our leading liberal thinkers have advanced and advocated this theory.

But what would be the upshot of such a scheme? It is the tendency of the human mind to submit to traditional conventionality. An opinion once disclosed becomes a precedent. But to overthrow a precedent is sometimes as impossible as supplanting a mountain. Great bodies move slowly. Dignity is soon clothed with conservatism. A precedent soon becomes an autocrat. Truth is thus encysted; her free wings are clipped; her lips are sealed. As human nature is ever the same, either her spokesmen would become contentious because of disagreements, in which case her established authority would be disputed; or they would become hypocritical and yield with the smile of the sycophant to what they knew was contrary to their convictions.

No! Once establish authority to which the individual must submit, and you lay the foundations for a new Vatican — a new Inquisition — a new Slavery! The Pope represented the consensus of learning in the Middle Ages. The consensus of the erudition of that age was agreeable to papal hermeneutics and *ex cathedra* deliverances.

How fared the bright and brave souls of those epochs? How fared a Galileo in that age of the papal consensus?—Galileo, who discovered the light; yet with pale and trembling lips was forced to swear his allegiance to falsehood?

How fared Copernicus, who, for thirty years, concealed under his pillow his great discovery concerning the heavens, and prayed to God for forgiveness for his sin, because his learning had led him to a truth which the Bible had not revealed?

How fared Bruno, whose mind was so luminous

and brilliant it shot its splendor forth into the realm of unborn generations, yet who was crushed in shameful death, because the consensus of the age's learning was too dense to absorb those rays of glory ?

Authority is the blight of Reason and the prison-cell of Hope. The individual is the crown and glory of civilization. If you crush the individual you crush the advance of thought and the revelation of truth. Truth is never revealed *en masse*, but to the few at first, and often to but one alone.

Truth is single-eyed and single-souled. She has her elect. She feeds on minds whom freedom nourishes and inspires. She is averse to bondage as she is to error. She must soar ever higher, higher, or her wings must droop. She requires elastic brains and elastic hearts. She patiently awaits her champions. When she discovers them she clings to them with adamantine hooks. She will either command or annihilate. If they falter, she tortures them; if they retreat, she dements them; if they refuse, she slays them.

She is like an eagle which seizes its prey, then hastens to transport it to some lofty eyrie; struggle as it will, its victim, once in the clutch of its talons, can never more be released, save by death. Truth is merciless. Truth is tyrannical. If you fear her, do not touch her; for if you are susceptible of her approval, yet reject her, she is as a woman scorned, worst of hell's infuriated " damned."

By such means Truth conquers the world and banishes Error. But if one be a willing servant, then how glad and great, how bright and beauteous

becomes the life of him who yields. Powers undreamed of are at his command. The stars are not more brilliant than the visions that enthrall him. Not more responsive to Æolian breezes are the pine tree-tops than his soul shall be to tunes of harmony and melodies of love.

Ay, then, for the first time in his experience he owns his brain, his soul—himself. He enters the mystic shrine and commands a god to arise. Greater wonders than were dreamed of in Elusinian or Osirian temples will be opened to his vision. Then will he know the meaning of Jesus' words, "Greater things than I have done will ye do." Then with the poet he will sing:

"I am owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and solar year,
Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain."

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